

**Date:** 30 October 2023

**Full project title:** Back on Track Community Consultation—Phase 3

**Reference number:** 2021-138

**Lead researcher:** Dr Alison Kennedy

**Participant Information Form**

This form contains information about the Community Consultation phase of the Back on Track project, to help you decide if you would like to participate. Please read it carefully. If you have any further questions about the research or your role, of if you would like to confidentially discuss your suitability, please contact the research team (see the end of this form for contact details).

**Motivation for the research**

Compared to the general Australian population, rural farming communities face a range of challenges to mental health and a higher risk of suicide. While farmers are generous at providing help to others, they are often reluctant to ask for help themselves. For those living in rural areas, access to mental health support is limited, and where support is available, providers may have a poor understanding of the realities of life and work in the farming environment. This project will involve collaborating with members of the farming community and rural stakeholders to develop new ways of providing support to members of the farming community. The focus will be on developing a way for members of the farming community to provide mental health support to peers who are currently experiencing low mood or particularly challenging situations.

**The research to date**

**PHASE 1**

Some research has already taken place in collaboration with the farming community (*Co-designing a peer-supported approach to improve mental health in rural farming communities—Phase 1*, DUHREC ethics approval no. 2020-232). Phase 1 involved:

1. Establishing a community working group (including farmers and other rural stakeholders), to help guide the project and provide feedback on the resources that are developed.
2. Focus groups with members of the farming community to hear peoples’ views and insights about the most effective way of setting up evidence-based farmer-to-farmer support for mental health challenges.
3. A feedback workshop to report back to the farming community the findings of the focus groups, and what a proposed vision for farmer-to-farmer mental support could look like.

**phase 2**

Phase 2 (*Co-designing a peer-supported approach to improve mental health in rural farming communities—Phase 2*, DUHREC ethics approval no. 2021-138) involved:

1. Developing a program to train members of the farming community to deliver mental health support to their peers, including creation of a training manual, worksheets and resources.
2. Delivering a pilot training program with a small group of farming community members.
3. Conducting interviews with organisations delivering peer-led mental health programs to help inform the best way to provide governance and support for community members delivering mental health support to their peers.

There were several ways in which people have been involved the project so far:

1. As a member of the working group
2. As focus group and interview participants
3. To help pilot test the training course.

**THE CURRENT RESEARCH – Phase 3**

The aim of this phase of the project is to conduct in-person community consultations in three rural locations across Victoria Southwest Victoria [Camperdown], Northeast Victoria [Tallangatta] and Gippsland [Maffra]. The purpose of the consultations is to introduce the work of the National Centre for Farmer Health and the Back on Track project (including what we have learnt from Phase 1 and 2). These community consultations will also provide an opportunity to gather local knowledge and input on how to best trial the peer-led mental health support program in each community. There will also be an opportunity to gauge interest in participating in the proposed trial and/or as a member of the project’s Community Reference Group.

**WHO can be involved?**

You can participate if you:

1. Are aged 18 years or over
2. Live, work and/or participate in the local community where these consultations will be held.

**What will my participation involve?**

Participation will involve attending a workshop (approximately 1 hour) to (i) learn more about the Back on Track project proposed for your community, (ii) contribute to small and larger group discussions to contribute local knowledge to help inform project roll out in your community, and (iii) identify existing networks, support services and stakeholders to be involved in the project promotion, roll out and support. There will also be opportunity for community members to ask questions and seek further understanding about the project (work to date as well as future project planning). Opportunities to be involved in the project in the future will be outlined at the events and, for those interested, there will be Expressions of Interest forms made available.

**SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

**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**](https://www.farmerhealth.org.au/access-a-psychologist-online)**.**

**`  
If you are at risk of harming yourself or others, please phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the emergency services on 000.**

**Funding and research partners**

The project is led by the National Centre for Farmer Health (Deakin University) in partnership with the Western District Health Service and with the involvement of researchers from the University of South Australia, La Trobe University and University of Melbourne.

Phase 3 of the project is funded by the Gardiner Foundation.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**POSSIBLE RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS**: Whilst this research is not designed to be distressing, during the course of participation you may hear others’ stories, or be reminded of events in your own life, that you find distressing.

**LIKELY BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS**: There may be some benefits from participating in the project, such as increasing your understanding of wellbeing, lifestyle factors, and prevention of emotional distress in yourself and your peers. You may decide to change personal behaviours to improve your health and wellbeing.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY**: The information you share may be included in reports to funders or in scientific publications, this will be general in nature and will never personally identify individuals.

As part of the consultation, you will be asked to follow Chatham House Rules (i.e. you will be encouraged to discuss with others what was said, but not reveal who said it).

**PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY**: Your involvement in the community consultation session is voluntary and we respect your right to withdraw at any time and do not need to provide any explanation. Should you withdraw your participation, information you have provided during community consultation can be excluded, but only prior to any reporting of the information.   
  
**STORAGE OF INFORMATION**: Only members of the research team will have access to transcripts, etc. Any information you choose to share in this project will be securely stored. Hard copies of any information (e.g. consent forms) will be kept in a locked data storage room at the research office at the National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH). Electronic data (e.g. transcripts and audio files) will be stored on a secure server managed at the NCFH, and data shared with members of the research team who are not at the NCFH will be stored in secure Deakin University cloud storage.

All of the information collected in this research will be kept at the NCFH 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.

**FUTURE USE OF DATA**: We may use the findings of this research to help us with other aspects of this research topic (i.e. improving mental health in rural farming communities). The data itself will not be re-used.

**RESEARCH PROCESS AND RESULTS**: The de-identified results of the research will be included in reports to the funder (Gardiner Foundation), presented at conferences, published in peer–reviewed academic journals and distributed through the NCFH website. If participants would like a copy of any of the publications produced as part of this research, they can contact the research team.

**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 Human Research Ethics Office

Deakin University

221 Burwood Highway

Burwood Victoria 3125

*Phone*: 9251 7129

*Email*: [research-ethics@deakin.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@deakin.edu.au)

Please quote project number 2021-138.

**ETHICS:** ***This research has been approved by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (approval no. 2021-138. Valid to 19/08/2024).***

**CONTACT details**

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

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

Ms Anna Greene: (03) 5551 8533 or email [agreene@wdhs.net](mailto:agreene@wdhs.net)

Ms Suzy Malseed: (03) 5551 8533 or email [smalseed@wdhs.net](mailto:smalseed@wdhs.net)