

12 February 2019

## 24-hour mental and social health support in Northern and Western Queensland

### NQ Connect to provide free mental and social health support for flood affected Queenslanders

All residents across flood affected North West Queensland now have access to a dedicated mental health support service, providing confidential 24/7 counselling support during flood recovery.

In response to the flood crisis in large areas of Queensland's northwest outback, the region's peak Primary Health Networks have combined resources to expand an immediate support service called 'NQ Connect'.

NQ Connect is a free phone and online counselling service providing a safe pathway to connect people to mental health services that are best suited to their needs; from counselling people who are worried, stressed, and affected by the floods, to more complex cases requiring multiple health service providers and referrals.

The expansion of this service to support flood affected communities in the region is possible by additional funding announced by the Federal Government.

Western Queensland and Northern Queensland Primary Health Networks have worked with our mental health services to enable increased services to our community, implemented as quickly as possible.

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) Chief Executive Officer John Gregg said weather events like the record-breaking floods have a dramatic impact on people's lives and bring about a range of intense emotions and long-term effects.

"Natural disasters such as major flooding impact entire communities and can significantly disrupt daily life, so it is common for people to experience a range of intense and confusing emotions," said Mr Gregg.

"NQ Connect provides residents with a single-entry point to access counselling support and guidance as communities recover from the devastating floods that have affected the region.

"The service has a team of professionally trained counsellors available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to listen to each person's concerns, and provide confidential support and assistance to develop coping strategies."

Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) Chief Executive Officer Stuart Gordon said NQ Connect also assists with navigation and access to locally available mental health services for ongoing support, and individuals have the opportunity to participate in online forums, enabling them to interact with others in the community who have been affected by the flood event.



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.

“Everyone will react to the recent flooding in different ways and it is imperative that we provide additional support right now to assist our communities recover,” said Mr Gordon.

“Callers to NQ Connect will speak with trained professional counsellors, psychologists, and social workers who can provide immediate advice and support, and if necessary, refer people to care that meets their specific circumstance, matched with the services in their region or beyond.

“The message is that nobody is alone and there are teams of support services ready to deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time, customised to individual needs.

“The hard work of local, state, and federal agencies, local community organisations, support services, providers, and community members to assist families affected on the front line speaks volumes of the spirit of Queenslanders when faced with adversity, however equally important is ensuring support is there in the long term for our communities.”

The NQ Connect service was established last year and has been expanded to cater for the predicted surge in mental health-related enquiries as a result of the North Queensland floods.

“NQ Connect is an established free and safe telephone and online counselling service for people in northern Queensland. As part of the flood response, we’re pleased to be able to extend this service to people living and working in drought affected western Queensland,” said Kim O’Neill, Chief Executive Officer of On the Line (that delivers NQ Connect).

“NQ Connect provides help and support for people who are worried, stressed and those effected by the recent floods. Such extreme events can leave people feeling hopeless and overwhelmed. Our professional counsellors will listen, support, and help you to feel better; and can also connect you with available support in your local community,” Ms O’Neill said.

In this time of crisis, there are people you can talk to. If you would like to talk with a professional counsellor, call NQ Connect 24/7 on [1300 059 625](tel:1300059625), or visit the NQ Connect website for web chat, video counselling or online discussion forums at [www.nqconnect.com.au](http://www.nqconnect.com.au)

## About NQ Connect

### Call NQ Connect 24/7 on 1300 059 625

NQ Connect is a free, safe, and confidential telephone and online counselling service for people in northern and western Queensland (age 15 and up).

NQ Connect provides help and support for people who are worried, stressed, and those affected by the recent floods. You can get in touch for things like:

- anxiety
- depression
- drug and alcohol abuse
- feeling hopeless
- grief and loss
- isolation, disconnection and loneliness
- relationship and family problems
- suicidal thoughts
- stress.

## ENDS

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