



MEDIA STATEMENT - SEPTEMBER 2007

Making progress in battle with depression

Rural communities have embraced a program to increase awareness of depression and how it can be treated, according to a psychologist who works closely with farming families.

"The word is slowly spreading that if someone on the land is having trouble coping with today's pressures, then help is readily available," said Paul Templeton, of the Riverina Counselling Service based at Wagga Wagga, NSW.

"While the program is aimed at helping farming families, it is great that it also delivers practical help to other members of the community who may not be travelling well."

Mr Templeton, who also lectures in mental health at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, addressed the fortieth community depression-awareness forum organised by fertiliser company Incitec Pivot.

The milestone forum, held at Cootamundra on 19 September, attracted 600 participants. It was organised in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Cootamundra and Thompsons Rural Supplies.

Mr Templeton told the forum that, despite a good start to the winter cropping season, many farmers were anxious about prospects for their current crops.

"The good start to the season could have created false hope if we don't get follow-up rain soon to enable growers to take advantage of the good prices for their crops," he said. "It is quite possible that this is putting them under more stress that the drought did."

Mr Templeton said an array of support services were available to help people who felt they were not coping well with pressure.

The Cootamundra community forum was initiated by Tania Baldock, a local mother of three who has close knowledge of depression and the potentially tragic outcomes it can produce if untreated.

"I lost a brother who took his own life as a result of suffering undiagnosed depression and I had post-natal depression myself, but sought help and recovered," she said.

“When my brother died, I decided that we had to bring depression out into the open like any health problem. We’ve got to remove the stigma about talking about it, so people will not be embarrassed to seek help.”

More than 5000 participants in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia have attended the Incitec Pivot community forums, which were designed in partnership with *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*.

“As a long-established agribusiness, Incitec Pivot believes strongly in supporting rural communities,” said the company’s Chairman, John Watson.

“It is very satisfying to know we have helped many families and steered people on the path to managing their illness and recovery.”

Mr Watson congratulated the Incitec Pivot employees for honouring the company’s commitment to caring for the community by organising the forums.

He presented a company award to Noel Trevaskis, Area Sales Manager for South East NSW, who has spent eight years raising awareness of depression in rural communities.



John Watson (left), Chairman of Incitec Pivot Limited, presents a company award to Noel Trevaskis, IPL's Area Sales Manager based at Goulburn, NSW, for his work on increasing awareness of depression in rural areas through IPL Community Forums. (Photo: Cootamundra Herald)



Richard Hicks, President of the Rotary Club of Cootamundra, thanks Tania Baldock for initiating and coordinating the IPL/Rotary Community Forum at Cootamundra, NSW, in September 2007. (Photo: Cootamundra Herald)