



## MEDIA RELEASE

# Trusted Advocates Network Trial in Scone

03 Apr 2019

Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce, said the Australian Government is boosting mental health support in the Upper Hunter, a drought-declared community, through the Trusted Advocates Network Trial.

Scone is one of nine trial locations taking part in the program held over three years, with training provided to community members to assist during times of need, such as drought.

“Extensive consultations undertaken by Major General Day revealed communities were looking for someone to talk to within their community who would listen to them rather than treat them,” Mr Joyce said.

“People want to engage with someone from their community, here in Scone rather than having a discussion with someone in the formal health or mental health system.

“As a result of these roundtable consultations with regional communities, the Government will provide \$463,815 over three years to provide additional informal mental health support and referral pathways to people affected by the drought.”

Minister for Regional Services, Senator Bridget McKenzie, said people living in rural, regional and remote Australia are facing unprecedented mental, personal and financial hardship as a result of the drought.

“Country people are strong people, but their strength is being tested and the Government will do what it can to provide the right support in the right place, at the right time,” Minister McKenzie said.

Up to 10 trusted community members, who may or may not have lived experience of mental illness, will learn skills in mental health first aid to assist them in this role.

The trusted community members will also receive training to identify risk factors as well as the ability to provide information on the services, both online and in person, to help farmers, families and the wider community access mental health assistance. The role itself is unpaid.

The Hunter New England Central Coast PHN will ensure that the Trusted Advocates are supported, mentored and receive appropriate clinical support and debriefing.

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Hon **Barnaby Joyce** MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

The Trusted Advocates Network is in addition to the Government's Empowering our Communities initiative worth \$24.4 million over two years from 2018-19, to fund community-led mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention initiatives.

Barnaby Joyce said, "I know people in the Upper Hunter are feeling the heavy stress and anxiety of drought and speaking with a member of their own community will provide the additional compassionate support they need at a very difficult time."

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