



MEDIA ALERT

27 January 2011

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE: RE-BUILDING COMMUNITY

WHAT: Key Experts from Queensland Alliance, Lifeline Community Care Queensland, Australian Medical Association Queensland and Australian Red Cross to discuss the mental health effects of the Queensland floods on communities and community organisations throughout Queensland.

WHO:

- Jeff Cheverton, CEO, **Queensland Alliance – Independent charity which represents community organisations working in mental health**
- Andrew Coghlan, National Manager of Emergency Services, **Australian Red Cross**
- Bob Gilkes, Executive Director, **Lifeline Community Care Queensland**
- Dr Richard Kidd, President-Elect, **Australian Medical Association Queensland**

WHEN: THURSDAY 11am 27 January 2011

WHERE: River Room, Riverside Receptions, 50 Oxlade Dr New Farm QLD 4005

Media Contact:

To arrange an interview or photo opportunity, please contact Louise Stokes, Communications Officer, 07 3252 9411 or 0420 978 835 lstokes@qldalliance.org.au



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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: RE-BUILDING COMMUNITY

Key experts from the Queensland Alliance, Lifeline Community Care Queensland, Australian Medical Association Queensland and Australian Red Cross will today highlight the need to support flood affected communities in the long-term, particularly in mental health.

Queensland Alliance CEO, Jeff Cheverton, said repairing physical infrastructure has been the right focus for the immediate flood response, but support to maintain community spirit and resilience will be needed in the coming weeks and months. Lifeline is already receiving a record number of calls from people in crisis. Experience in other disasters shows a 10% increase in demand for mental health services.

“The demands on community mental health organisations will only increase,” Mr. Cheverton said. “We know that many people have now got through the initial crises and are beginning to understand the enormity of the challenge facing them and their communities. We are calling on the Queensland Government and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to consider how best to maintain the flood of goodwill and community resilience witnessed in the last month around Queensland.”

A new report by the Queensland Alliance, entitled *Rising to the Challenge* surveys 103 mental health community organisations across flood-affected Queensland with sixty-five completed responses.

“19% of respondents have been damaged by floods and 7.5% have lost their premises. This is a huge cost on non-profit organisations assisting the community, but currently non-profit organisations are not eligible for small business support under the National Disaster Recovery Agreement,” said Queensland Alliance CEO Jeff Cheverton.

The report *Rising to the Challenge* also shows that 37% of respondents have already experienced an increase in demand on services. Most organisations in flood affected areas are struggling to support existing clients, let alone meet the needs of rising demand.

“The recommendations we have made in this report are not complex. Three-quarters of our members identified local strategies that could be deployed to maintain the resilience and well-being of their communities,” said CEO Jeff Cheverton.

“Maintaining a strong social infrastructure is as important for community recovery as re-building physical infrastructure. As the waters subside and the last mud is shoveled away, we need to support the amazing resilience of local communities to recover and stay strong.”

Media Contact:

To arrange an interview or photo opportunity or for a copy of the report, please contact Louise Stokes, Communications Officer, 07 3252 9411 or 0420 978 835 lstokes@qldalliance.org.au