

MEDIA RELEASE

3 January 2012

MENTAL HEALTH COORDINATOR INSTALLED IN TIME FOR ANNIVERSARY

As the anniversary of last summer's disasters draws near, support for the emotional health of Innisfail and Atherton Tablelands residents has taken a step forward with the appointment of a dedicated local mental health coordinator.

Jo Abbatangelo, well known across the Cassowary Coast and Atherton Tablelands region for her decade-long efforts in roles such as trainer and support group educator, kicked off her new role in late December.

"Recovering from a natural disaster is a complex process which continues to evolve over a long period of time," Jo said.

"Disaster impacted communities recover best when personal and community networks are functioning in their lives. As such, mental health consultation needs to be an integral part of long term recovery and enhancing this through on the ground resources and good networking is something I very much look forward to."

Jo's position is one of 5 across rural and regional Queensland aimed at empowering organisations to create activities which promote social and emotional well-being and build resilience in communities affected by natural disaster.

Known as the Resilient Places Project and administered by Queensland Alliance for Mental Health, this initiative is committed to enhancing mental health service linkages, coordination and collaboration with communities recovering from natural disasters.

Local coordinators complement recovery responses in communities, working closely with the Community Development and Engagement Initiative through the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ). The support they provide to local non-government organisations about mental health is to:

- enable organisations to respond to local community needs;
- build awareness and facilitate access to resources, supports, training and funding;
- develop mechanisms for information sharing across agencies;
- coordinate agency responses to individuals, highly vulnerable groups and whole-of-communities.

Mental health community coordinators are now servicing three areas of Queensland that have been impacted by disaster, bringing to their position a unique knowledge and understanding of their region.

As well as delivering on the ground support through our Community Coordination Project, the Project is also administering a micro-grants program. The micro-grants are intended to support activities in communities recovering from natural disaster to support local ownership and build on the assets and strengths of the communities.

The Resilient Places Project has been made possible through funding provided under the Mental Health Disaster Recovery Package, which is a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland Governments under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. The Project has received funding until 30 June 2013 to establish and deliver a Mental Health Community Coordination Project and Mental Health Resource Hub.

ENDS

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For more information on the micro-grants visit <http://www.qldalliance.org.au/resilient-places>

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