
REGIONAL MEN'S HEALTH INITIATIVE MID TERM
REVIEW

April 2012

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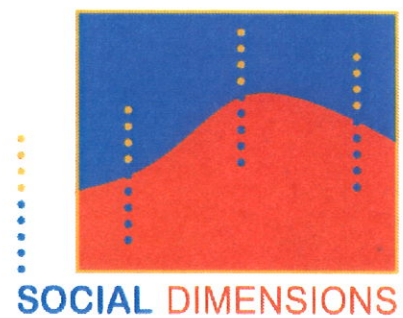
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Executive summary

The Regional Men's Health Initiative (RMH) is achieving its objectives of providing a unique and effective service to men, families and communities throughout regional Western Australia. RMH demonstrates best practice in mental health promotion and suicide prevention, for which it has received state and national recognition.

The objectives of the project funding were to continue Wheatbelt Men's Health, Inc (WMH) activities and to expand to the three Northwest regions.

This review found that RMH enjoys an excellent reputation in the grain and sheep growing region of the state, attracting the support of politicians, community leaders, businesses, the media, public servants and rural men and families. RMH has been receiving invitations to community events across the Northwest and the amount of work done in that region is likely to increase.

This midterm review uses a mixed methods approach to explore and describe Regional Men's Health operations and its impacts, taking into account the context of regional Western Australia with its constraints and opportunities. Face-to-face interviews were held with members of Wheatbelt Men's Health staff and Management Committee members. Representatives of funding bodies and other men's health services in regional WA were interviewed by telephone. In-depth interviews were conducted with people who had direct involvement with RMH activities as an organiser or participant and shorter interviews were held with others about a specific program they had organised. Activity data available from quarterly and monthly reports were reanalysed and the education material was assessed for health promotion effectiveness.

The evidence gathered supports the following conclusions:

- The program directly saves lives through personal support services and indirectly through giving communities and individuals the knowledge and capacity to help others.
- The program is well designed and uses evidence-based strategies.
- The approach is unique among men's health services in the state.
- WMH enjoys an excellent reputation for quality and effectiveness.
- The numbers of activities delivered by region are broadly aligned with the geographic distribution of men and farmers in regional Western Australia. The Great Southern appears somewhat less served than other regions. The northwest and eastern parts of the state receive about as much activity as would be expected based on population.
- Governance structures have improved through the recruitment of new members to the Management committee. Further work has begun in attracting other members with appropriate skills, experience and networks and in defining the role of the management committee in setting and reviewing the strategic development of the organisation.
- Progression planning within the organisation has occurred with the appointment of a part time Program and Development Officer and the increasing profile and responsibilities of the Senior Community Educator.

- Maintaining current activity levels will not be possible without the appointment of another community educator.
- There is a strong demand for RMH services for worker and communities involved in the resource sector. RMH need more staff to meet this demand and needs to find the correct balance between serving the agricultural and mining regions of the state.

The current funding is scheduled to end in June 2013. RMH is currently underspent. Approval for a no-cost extension to the program should be granted as soon as possible.

Regional communities in Western Australia will continue to face the challenges of agricultural adjustment and an expanding resource sector for many years to come. RMH has a proven record of assisting regional men, families and communities to cope with the uncertainty that comes with changing circumstances. If RMH did not exist, the state would have to create it. All parties should work together to find secure funding for this valuable state resource.