

News Release

10 November, 2008



Let's talk about depression was the message from the Black Dog Institute and the people of Tamworth responded in a positive way to the range of activities conducted by one of Australia's leading authorities on mood disorders during their visit from 5 to 9 November.

The Institute's Executive Director said he was pleased the Institute was able to provide a range of information and resources to help the Tamworth community understand more about depression and mood disorders.

"Our visit was designed to break the silence and get the community talking about mood disorders," said Professor Parker.

Importantly, the Institute was able to partner with the North West Slopes Division of General Practice to establish a MAP Centre in Tamworth which is a world first program that assists in the assessment and diagnosis of conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder.

Local GP, Dr Roland Loeve said, "The MAP will offer GPs in the area an assessment which is relatively simple and easy for the patient to use. It will save time, give an accurate diagnosis, and allow early decision making on which to base treatment. This will improve access for patients as well as free doctors to focus on assisting patients through relevant treatment pathways."

The Mood Assessment Program (or the MAP as it is commonly known) is the brainchild of the Black Dog Institute and is a computerized assessment and diagnostic program incorporating nearly a quarter of a century of sophisticated clinical expertise.

Other activities during the week included professional education and training for local general practitioners and psychologists. In addition, there was a **Happiness and Wellbeing** community forum at the Town Hall on the Friday night. It was interesting to see the different points of view on what steps people take in their lives to achieve happiness.

The Institute reported a lot of interest in their large Black Dog Institute bus that was parked in Kable Avenue during the visit. Many people stopped to obtain information and resources such as Fact Sheets that help explain the different mood disorders and the mental health services available.

Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor, attended a number of the week's activities, describing the visit as extremely important for Tamworth as so many were impacted by mood disorders and that the Institute had brought with it a message of hope.

State Member for Tamworth, Peter Draper, was also supportive of the visit, and although unable to attend activities due to an illness, he did prepare a message for the opening of the MAP Centre. He said the new service would have very positive impacts for patients, family, friends and the overall health provision.