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COUNTRY AMBASSADORS TO TACKLE DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER IN RURAL NSW

A former player who is part of rugby league's folklore has teamed up with nine other soul of the earth country men and women to help people suffering from the crippling effects of mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder in rural New South Wales.

The ex-player/farmer is Ken Campbell, who was part of the victorious Western Division team that surprisingly beat the team of city slickers from Penrith 7-4 in the memorable final of the Amco Cup (a mid week competition) back in 1974.

Now more than 30 years on, the tough front rower is one of the 10 Ambassadors chosen by the Black Dog Institute to provide a helping hand to people in the bush who suffer from mood disorders.

The Institute is stepping-up its efforts in rural New South Wales; knowing that the suicide rate amongst male farmers and farm workers is twice that of the Australian male population.

“We need to do more to increase access to quality information on mood disorders and ensure greater equity of service provision between metropolitan and rural areas,” according to the Institute's Executive Director, Professor Gordon Parker

Each of the Ambassadors has personal experience of mood disorders either as a carer or a sufferer and have been trained by the Institute to speak at community events about mood disorders. In addition, they will be a local contact for communities who may feel cutoff from services in rural and remote parts of the State.

The Institute's Ambassadors are:

- **Ken Campbell** - former farmer from Baradine in Central Western NSW
- **Tim Heffernan** – former teacher from Wollongong who grew-up in country villages and towns of Swan Creek, Dalton, Uranquinty and Wagga Wagga. As a teacher he worked in schools in Albury, Wagga Wagga, Cooma, Nowra and Wollongong
- **Bill Howey** – a veterinarian from Scone in the Hunter Valley who has been closely associated with education and social issues in the community

- **Leah Milston** – former teacher who now lives at Mogo and has a shop on the South Coast, who believes in mental health promotion and changing community attitudes toward mental illness.
- **Robyn Nugent**- is from Tamworth and has worked in the area of disability services for over 20 years. Robyn will work as a representative for the Hunter/New England Region
- **Yvonne Quadros** – Lives at Coffs Harbour on the North Coast and is actively involved in the community and Rotary with mental health issues. Yvonne is on several committees including the Area Health Community Participation Forum. Other interests include the arts and cultural events.
- **Graeme Ryder**- lives at Coffs Harbour and provides a high level of experience while having interests in the arts, social and sporting events
- **Tony Sevil** – is from Uralla and will represent the Hunter/New England region. He grew up in rural NSW and is now semi-retired, having worked in a wide variety of jobs
- **Glenn Smith** – Lives at Dubbo in the central west and while he began his career in the advertising industry he has fought his own battle with depression and has begun a course of study in community welfare
- **Sally Sweetapple** – lives on a farm at Milton on the south coast. Sally and her partner farm cattle and sheep organically on a small scale and breed kelpie cross border Collie's . Sally believes Collie's are great companion dogs and have played a big part in helping her fight depression and wants to investigate this further.

“Our ambassadors are a diverse group but all have close ties with country NSW and will help open peoples eyes to what services and help is available for sufferers of mood disorders,” Professor Parker said.

Initial contact with the Ambassadors is being coordinated through the Black Dog Institute. Enquiries are directed to Deana Bayoud, the Community Education and Outreach Officer, via email d.bayoud@unsw.edu.au or the Black Dog Institute website www.blackdoginstitute.org.au which also has details of other Institute rural programs.

MEDIA INQUIRIES: Contact Ian Dose (M) 0419 618 606 or email: i.dose@unsw.edu.au Media requiring Pics of the Ambassadors and contact phone numbers for interviews should email their request.