



NEWS RELEASE

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BLACK DOG INSTITUTE INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL MENTAL HEALTH

The Black Dog Institute plans to pilot a ground-breaking attack on rural mental health early next year.

The Institute, with funding of \$1 million from the New South Wales Government, is developing the Mood Assessment Program (the MAP) which will help General Practitioners and Health workers with the know-how of highly skilled mood disorder specialists.

“The MAP is a computerised assessment program that has the potential to help people suffering mood disorders to obtain specialists’ treatment – particularly those in rural and remote areas of NSW,” according to the Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute, Professor Gordon Parker.

The MAP incorporates nearly a quarter of a century of sophisticated clinical expertise in the assessment, diagnosis and management planning for those people with mood disorders.

The MAP has already been used by more than 500 visitors to the Institute’s Depression Clinic. The results continue to be validated and Professor Parker said the plan was to pilot the MAP in the wider community early in 2007, followed by its full rollout soon afterwards.

The Black Dog Institute is a leading authority in the mood disorders field. Its activities include fostering ongoing research, advanced clinical services through the State, providing education and training programs for professionals and offering support and resources to consumers and the community.

The Institute’s website www.blackdoginstitute.org.au records over 100,000 hits a month, making it Australia’s No 1 ‘hit site’ for Bipolar Disorder and for Mood Disorders

The Institute is involved in a wide range of rural mental health initiatives.

On November 8, 2006, the Institute is facilitating a Community Forum and Professional Development Forum at Canowindra in Central Western NSW. The Forums will be attended by a range of mental health professionals and workers as well as the public and are aimed at assisting in the better recognition and management of mood disorders in the community.

On other fronts, the Institute is:

- A member of the **NSW Rural Mental Health Network** – an organisation of approximately 20 members set up by the NSW Farmers' Association working together on rural mental health
- Working with the **NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health** – to better educate mental health professionals. Institute represented on Educational Committee.
- **Conducting Community outreach activities**, involving:
 - Resources, information, brochures, books and support for people in rural areas via the Institute's Consumer & Community Resource Centre
 - Road shows and visits to rural areas – most recent being to Wambianna near Trangie in Central West where over 500 people attended a depression awareness forum hosted by local farmers.
 - Information and education about depression and bipolar disorder via Institute's website – note especially online speaker presentations designed to be easily accessible to people outside metro area.
- **Providing Professional education and training programs** for GPs, psychologists, nurses, school counsellors around NSW.
 - Building clinic training for GPs – where we bring GPs to observe in the clinic. (We have a flat in the clinic – can be used by visiting GPs and others.)
 - We go by request to rural areas – we cover the costs. Our training is independent of the pharmaceutical industry –we place great value on that independence.
- **Operating a Depression Clinic** – open to anyone in NSW – many patients from rural areas.

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