



LEFT: Times of drought can compound the effects of mental illness. The Black Dog Institute, using \$1 million in State funds, is organising a program to help rural people suffering from mood disorders get help.

Mental health push

THE Black Dog Institute plans to provide a pilot for a groundbreaking attack on rural mental health disorders this year.

The institute, using \$1 million provided by the NSW Government, has developed a Mood Assessment Program (MAP) which aims to provide doctors and health workers with the know-how of highly skilled mood disorder specialists.

Executive director of the Black Dog Institute, Professor Gordon Parker, said MAP was a computerised assessment program which had the potential to help people suffering mood disorders obtain specialist treatment, particularly those in rural and remote areas of NSW.

"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," Professor Parker said.

"It has already been used by more than 500 visitors to the institute's depression clinic."

The results continued to be vali-

By **KIM CHAPPELL**

dated and a pilot of the MAP in the wider rural community would be undertaken in 2007, Professor Parker said.

The Black Dog Institute is now a leading authority in the mood disorders field.

Its activities include fostering research, and providing advanced clinical services through the State and education and training programs for professionals, and generally offering support and resources to consumers and communities.

The institute's website records more than 100,000 hits a month – Australia's most accessed site for bipolar and mood disorders.

Professor Parker said the institute was involved in a wide range of rural mental health initiatives.

Last November it had staged a community and professional development forum at Canowindra in the Central West.

The forum was attended by a range of mental health professionals

and workers, as well as the public, and its purpose was to assist in better recognition and management of mood disorders in the community.

The institute is also a member of the NSW Rural Mental Health Network, an organisation of about 20 members set up by the NSW Farmers Association to work on mental health issues.

The Black Dog Institute conducts community outreach services involving providing resources, information, brochures, books and support generally for people in rural areas through the institute's Consumer and Community Resource Centre.

It recently distributed to libraries across NSW a display stand dealing with mood disorders.

Libraries to receive the stands include the Central Library in Goulburn and branches at Yass, Gunning, Braidwood and Crookwell.

More than 500 people attended a depression awareness forum organised recently by local farmers at Wambianna, near Trangie in the Central West.

■ Visit www.blackdoginstitute.org.au