

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Rural blokes – don't be too tough to talk to your rural GP

*International Men's Health Week*

Country blokes deserve to be healthy and happy and their first step towards making sure they are, and stay, that way, is a visit to their rural doctor.

**Dr Peter Rischbieth, Vice President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia and a GP in Murray Bridge in rural SA, said that regular visits to a doctor is the most important step in improving men's health outcomes.**

"While the seasons have turned and prices are high, many country blokes are still feeling the physical and the emotional results of weathering a number of tough years," Dr Rischbieth said.

"In most areas of health men have worse outcomes than women, and men in the country have even higher health risks due to their location, work and lifestyle.

"Men are more likely to have high blood pressure, misuse alcohol and have a low consumption of fruit and vegetables – all factors increasing their risk of ill-health.

"We need our men to be healthy and strong so by taking preventative action we can reduce the danger of major health risks including stroke, cancer, cardiovascular problems including heart attacks strokes, as well as depression.

"Start an open discussion with friends and family and, if you are in the age group that needs it, get a regular yearly check up with your GP who will be able to check for all age appropriate health risks, answer any questions about your health and outline the steps to take to make sure you stay healthy for the future," Dr Rischbieth said.

One in six Australian men will experience clinical depression in their lifetime and many rural men are at high risk because of their stressful lifestyles.

Factors such as drought or flood-induced financial difficulties, stock loss and the constant physical and mental demands of farming work and operating rural businesses place enormous pressure on many men in the bush. They can often be isolated from friends and family and sometimes find it difficult to know where to turn to for help.

"It is important that men realise when they are getting overwhelmed and know how to get assistance," Dr Rischbieth said.

"Recognising the symptoms of depression in yourself and others can be the first step to beating it.

"Symptoms include tiredness, irritability, sleep disturbance, and loss of interest in work or other activities.

"Remember that there are services out there to help you or you can chat with your GP. The sooner you seek help, the sooner you can start getting back to your old self."

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**Available for interview:** Dr Peter Rischbieth on 0408 813 143

**Alternative media contact:** Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638