

11 September 2024

Cost of living pressures... Time to ask R U Ok?

R U OK Day – Thursday 12 September 2024



Cost of living stress is forcing many to modify their lives, increasing financial, social, parenting and relationship stress, making it an important time to ask R U OK?



Dr RT Lewandowski, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) said that the current cost of living crisis is impacting on the health and wellbeing of many Australians.

“Everyone is feeling the effects of increased living expenses, whether that be the increased cost of rent, mortgage, utilities or groceries,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“This can cause significant stress, leading to increased depression, anxiety and social isolation.

“In fact maintaining social connections when you are under financial pressure is a common challenge, particularly for singles, who may no longer be able to afford to meet friends for dinner or drinks, or have to cut back on dating due to the expense.

“Financial stress and economic insecurity is associated with an increased risk of intimate partner violence.

“Women's financial dependence on perpetrators can be a significant barrier to leaving, trapping women in abusive relationships. The shortage of affordable housing right across Australia is a huge problem, but for those in rural and remote areas the shortage of ANY available housing can make leaving an abusive relationship feel impossible.

“Particularly for women with children when trying to navigate and exit a relationship, the cost of living is a major prohibiting factor,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“Alongside big issues, such as how they will financially be able to support themselves and their children to afford housing, clothing and family law matters, even basic expenses like being able to fill the car with petrol can be the barrier that stops them leaving a dangerous situation.”

GPs are often the only provider of mental health care to a rural or remote community and the best place to access confidential advice for those struggling in difficult circumstances.

“Some people are simply not OK without an external reason, and depression can set in with no particular trigger apparent. If you know someone that you think has been withdrawn, down or disconnected, ask them R U OK?”

“If you need help preparing for the conversation there are some great resources available at ruok.org.au, as well as advice on where to go for help, but even a regular text message can remind people you're thinking about them and help reduce a sense of isolation they may be suffering from,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“If you reach out and find someone who is not doing ok, supporting them to take the first step in booking a consult with their rural GP can be difficult, but just by starting that conversation you can really assist them to open up and acknowledge that they need some help.

“While it can be difficult, it's important to remember that nobody is on their own, and there are many supports available. It's not always easy to keep the conversation going when someone says they're not OK, but it could change a life.”

Domestic Violence help is available from:

- 1800 Respect national helpline: 1800 737 732
- Women's Crisis Line: 1800 811 811
- Men's Referral Service: 1300 766 491
- Lifeline's 24-hour crisis line: 131 114

[Photo of Dr RT Lewandowski](#)

Available for interview:

RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski

RDAA CEO, Peta Rutherford

State specific contacts also available

Media contacts:

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890

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