



## **Participant Information Sheet (Focus group)**

### **Title of research project**

The Lighthouse Program: Evaluating the effectiveness of a stakeholder-informed online training programme for parents, carers and supporters of 10–13-year-olds with unmet mental health needs in rural, regional and remote settings.

### **Introduction**

I am Professor John Hurley of the Faculty of Health at Southern Cross University (SCU). I am working on this research project with Professor Marie Hutchinson, Professor Brenda Happell, Associate Professor Jacqui Yoxall of SCU, and Professor Bindi Bennett of Federation University. Together we are conducting a research project to further co design and refine an existing education programme. This digital education programme aims to enhance parent, carer, or supporter capabilities in responding to unmet mental health needs of rural or regional 10–13-year-old children in their care.

### **What is this research about?**

Mental health services for children living outside of metropolitan settings are inadequate, with complex barriers challenging prompt access to appropriate services. These barriers include extended wait times for counselling, travel and financial costs, knowledge gaps on mental health generally, and how to access services more specifically. We believe offering relevant and practical training to parents, carers and supporters of children experiencing mental health and behavioural challenges will be helpful to the children, and those who are caring for them. We previously ran a successful education programme for parents, carers and supporters of teenagers in regional settings. We now seek to refine that programme for digital delivery to parents of a younger cohort through eliciting the experiences of rural and regional parents/supporters of children aged 10-13.

### **What does this research involve?**

Two separate online focus groups, one for parents and carers and the other for youth mental health clinicians and primary school teachers, will be held. It is anticipated each focus group will run for approximately 60-90 minutes. Rural and regional parents/supporters of children aged 10-13 will be asked to share their experiences of perceived needs, service deficits and what education would better support them. Headspace clinicians and rural and regional primary teachers will also be asked about their perceived needs. Both focus groups will examine the existing education programme and offer insights from their experiences as to how it can be altered and/or refined for this regional and rural younger age group.

Participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time during the study and their data will be removed. Participants will be offered a \$50.00 grocery voucher to take part in the focus group.

[www.scu.edu.au](http://www.scu.edu.au)

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With your permission, the focus groups will be audio-recorded, but you can ask for the recording to be paused at any time if you wish to say something "off the record".

Informed by the findings of this study, a second study will then be conducted which will evaluate the effectiveness of the education programme, and the lived experiences of those who took part in it.

**What are the risks associated with this research?**

One potential low-level risk has been identified for the research project. This risk is unlikely and will be managed as highlighted below:

1. Participant's emotional discomfort during the focus group - Participation is voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time. If a participant opts out of the study, their data will be removed. This will be explained to all participants before the commencement of the study.
2. At the end of the focus group, participants will be given the time to express any additional concerns or thoughts. All participants will be given information, including web addresses and telephone numbers of free counselling services they can utilize if they become distressed by topics raised during the groups. (see services listed below).

<p><b>Lifeline:</b> Phone 13 11 14 SMS 0477 131 114 <a href="https://www.lifeline.org.au/">https://www.lifeline.org.au/</a></p>	<p><b>Head To Health</b> Phone 1800 595 212. <a href="https://www.headtohealth.gov.au/">https://www.headtohealth.gov.au/</a></p>	<p><b>Beyond Blue:</b> Phone 1300 22 4636 <a href="https://www.beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat">https://www.beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat</a></p>
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**My responsibilities to you.**

Participants involved in the project have our assurance that any information shared with us will be de-identified so that your name will not appear in any reports or presentations of our work. Data, including notes obtained during the focus groups, will be kept in a safe place during the project and in a secure archive for five years after the projects have ended.

**The likelihood and form of dissemination of the research results, including publication**

On completion of the project, we plan to present findings at seminars, conferences and through written publications in peer-reviewed journals.

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### **Informed Consent**

Those who agree to participate in the focus groups will be required to complete a digital Consent Form before the groups are run. You can withdraw at any time prior to, during or after the focus group.

### **Inquiries**

We are happy to answer any questions that you have about the research projects and can be contacted as follows:

- Researcher – Professor John Hurley Email: [john.hurley@scu.edu.au](mailto:john.hurley@scu.edu.au)

### **Feedback to Participants**

At the end of the projects, you will be sent a summary of the study findings via your email address or other method stipulated. No names of participants will be included in this summary. We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study. In the future, however, it is hoped the study could offer an effective way to better support rural and regional children with unmet mental health needs while they are awaiting specialist services.

### **Ethics Approval**

The research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Southern Cross University. The approval number is 2024/057

### **Complaints**

If you have concerns about the **ethical conduct** of this research or the researchers, write to the following:

*The Ethics Complaints Officer  
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157  
Lismore NSW 2480  
Email: [ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au](mailto:ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au)*

All information is confidential and will be handled as soon as possible.

If you agree to take part in this research, please complete the consent form.

Thank you for considering the research project.

Yours sincerely,

Professor John Hurley

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