



## Growing local mental health support

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**Over thirty community members, health professionals, tradespeople, miners and pastors from Kalgoorlie, Leonora and Esperance have just graduated with a *Grow Local* Certificate IV in Mental Health, equipping them to provide much needed mental health support to their communities.**

*Grow Local* is an initiative developed by WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) in 2017 in response to the difficulties faced in recruiting and retaining culturally appropriate mental health workers to assist and support Aboriginal people.

It was also identified as a need during the filming of *Bus of Hope*, a documentary that followed a group of people from Leonora as they embarked on a journey to Alice Springs, sharing their personal stories of how suicide has impacted their lives and their tight-knit community.

Federal Member for O'Connor, Mr Rick Wilson said he was delighted that this Australian Government funded initiative has not only increased the number of qualified mental health workers in the region but will also encourage more people to access culturally sensitive services.

"The knowledge and expertise of these *Grow Local* graduates will really strengthen the local mental health workforce and, importantly, develop capacity within communities which often struggle to get timely and appropriate support for mental health issues," Mr Wilson said.

WAPHA's regional manager Tralee Cable said *Grow Local* has been an amazing journey, due to the enthusiasm of the graduates and the tremendous support of the community.

"Six of the graduates have already been recruited by local organisations in Kalgoorlie and Leonora, specifically Hope Community Services and Centrecare, while others are now able to actively help their communities to work through mental health issues in an informed way.

"I am over the moon that we now have local people, who understand the local issues and have the trust of their local communities to deliver grassroots suicide prevention and mental health support that complements the work being done by other mental health professionals.

Kalgoorlie graduate Cindi Alves-Lei, who has recently secured a job as a mental health support worker with Centrecare Kalgoorlie, said she was inspired to be part of the solution for the people in her community.

"Seeing people throughout my life experience mental health issues with no support and seeing the disconnections and breakdowns of family and relationships from lack of knowledge and understanding of what they were going through tore at something inside of me.

“These people and these experiences inspired me to enrol in *Grow Local* so I could be equipped with the right tools to help and empower others who face challenges in life and to let them know they are not alone,” Ms Alves-Lei said.

WAPHA worked closely with local Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders to ensure the course would be suitable for Aboriginal people and with the Australian Medical Association WA (AMA) training division who designed and delivered the unique and regionally tailored training.

The program was funded by WAPHA, under the Australian Government PHN Program, and the University of Western Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project. Local employer, AngloGold Ashanti, also made a financial contribution.

Formal graduation ceremonies took place in Kalgoorlie and Leonora this week.

You can watch the *Bus of Hope* video here <https://bit.ly/2M5RSKx>

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**About WAPHA:** WAPHA oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, Area Health Services and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit [www.wapha.org.au](http://www.wapha.org.au)