

## Media statement

17 April 2015

### **Funding delivers Mental Health First Aid to Townsville and Palm Island**

Training to recognise and respond to mental illness will be boosted through funding from the Queensland Mental Health Commission.

Mental Health First Aid training will be delivered to around 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and mental health workers from Townsville and Palm Island, equipping them to better support people with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said the training was part of the Commission's \$413,000 initial investment this financial year in Indigenous mental health.

Dr van Schoubroeck was in Townsville today (Friday 17 April) along with international mental health and wellbeing expert Gregor Henderson and local mental health professionals, volunteers and community members.

Dr van Schoubroeck said: "Community action is fundamental to promoting good mental health and wellbeing, reducing community distress and promoting healing."

She congratulated Townsville-based SOLAS and other community-based organisations for raising awareness of mental health issues and improving mental health outcomes for Queenslanders.

SOLAS (which stands for Supported Options and Lifestyle Access Services Ltd) is a community managed organisation that delivers quality wellbeing and mental health services.

SOLAS Chief Executive Officer Cathy O'Toole said Mental Health First Aid training would better equip mental health workers and community members who deal with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Not only will we have up to 35 people trained in Mental Health First Aid, we will also have two more qualified instructors who will be able to deliver further training programs in the future," Ms O'Toole said.

Mental Health First Aid is a nationally-recognised program that helps people to recognise signs and symptoms and respond appropriately to various mental health crisis situations, engage with and support the person and direct them to appropriate professional help.

Dr van Schoubroeck said the Queensland Mental Health Commission had allocated \$88,000 in grants this year to organisations delivering Indigenous mental health programs, including the \$14,950 to SOLAS for Mental Health First Aid training.

"This year the Commission has also invested \$325,000 in the National Empowerment Project in the Cherbourg and Kuranda communities for support services, training of community workers and a healing program in each community," she said.

SOLAS has also received a grant of \$14,850 to deliver Youth Mental Health first aid training to service

providers and people working with young people in Townsville, Ayr and Charters Towers.

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**Media contact:** Kate Southwell, (07) 3405 0718