



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 8 October 2018

icare NSW HELPING NEW ENGLAND EMPLOYERS TO 'SHARE THE JOURNEY' OF MENTAL HEALTH WITH THEIR WORKERS

Insurance and Care NSW (icare) is inviting employers, industry groups and treatment providers in Tamworth to attend a special **Mental Health Forum** on **Thursday 11 October**, as part of Mental Health Awareness Month.

Elizabeth Ritchie, icare's Regional Relationship Manager, said the purpose of the event was to provide tools to help people identify, at an early stage, individuals within their workplaces and local community who are experiencing mental health challenges.

"In the 2016/17 policy renewal year, mental health workers compensation claims cost the New England North West region over \$2.2 million. This was the third highest mental health claims cost of any region across NSW, excluding Sydney and Newcastle," Ms Ritchie said.

"What should be concerning for local employers is that workers experiencing a mental health claim are off work for an average of 129 days. This is 186 per cent longer than the average return to work timeframe for the region.

"Whilst mental health claims have been made across a range of industries, the prevalence of claims is highest in the Health & Community Services sector, accounting for almost 44% of mental health claims in the region," she said.

Psychological claims are among the most complex and costly. The longer people are off work, the greater their risk of social isolation which can have a huge impact on the wellbeing of people who are already feeling vulnerable.

"It makes sense to be focused on building a psychologically resilient workplace culture. This starts with prevention of psychological injury at work and also providing support for workers who may be experiencing a problem," Ms Ritchie said.

By attending icare's Mental Health Forum, employers in the region will be better positioned to manage and support the mental health of their workers. Through a series of speaker sessions, employers will learn strategies to improve the wellbeing and resilience of their employees, be able to recognise the signs of mental health challenges sooner and feel confident accessing services to support their employees and get them back to work sooner.

"We're excited to have former professional rugby league player and Armidale-local, Dean Widders, joining us as a special guest speaker at the Forum," Ms Ritchie said.

"Dean will be sharing some interesting stories from his journey, his personal challenges with mental health and resilience, and the positive impact of his social connections during challenging periods of his career.

"We're looking forward to partnering more closely with businesses in the Tamworth region, working with them to develop practical improvement plans to build mentally healthy workplaces," Ms Ritchie said.

When: Thursday, 11 October 2018, 8:30am-1:30pm

Where: Quality Hotel Powerhouse Tamworth, 248 Armidale Road, Tamworth

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About icare: icare (Insurance & Care NSW) is the insurance and care provider for NSW.

We insure 3.7 million workers, motorists and builders and 296,000 employers. For more information, visit: www.icare.nsw.gov.au

