

JUST A FARMER

MOVIE SCREENING

Sunday 8 September, 2024



Background

The October–December 2022 floods impacted 44 per cent of the Gannawarra Shire with extensive flooding across rural areas and farming districts. Residents of the Shire were impacted both physically and mentally, and activities continue to be delivered to support recovery.

Mallee Family Care approached Council to partner with the aim to bring the Australian movie 'Just a Farmer' and script author, actor and producer, Leila McDougall to Gannawarra.

The movie, set in a rural farming district explores the themes around the challenges of farming and the isolation and mental health struggles faced by those in a rural setting.

A Question and Answer panel was planned to follow the movie to highlight the support and networks available locally to support those who may be struggling with mental health.

Panel members consisted of Leila McDougall, Damian Walshe–Howling co-star, writer/director, Claire Gillen, Northern District Community Health Chronic Disease Management Nurse, Anna McGee, Rural Financial Counsellor and Brett Hosking, Farmer and former VFF President.

Simon Schlitz, local farmer was the MC for the event to guide the afternoon's activities and facilitate the Q & A Panel.

The afternoon event was made possible through partnerships and support from Mallee Family Care, Gannawarra Shire Council, Northern District Community Health, the Rural Financial Counselling Service, and the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under the Commonwealth–State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) as part of the Gannawarra Community Flood Recovery Program.

Event aims

- To bring Gannawarra residents together to connect in a supported setting
- Provide an opportunity for attendees to reflect on their own wellbeing and mental health
- Bring together agencies to deliver a personal connection and offer professional support
- Share information and resources to support the Gannawarra community's mental health and wellbeing
- Facilitate connections among attendees, fostering a sense of community and enabling networking and mutual support
- Support a local community group to provide catering



What did the event deliver?

- 170 attended the movie screening and Q & A session
- 150 information bags distributed with flood support and mental health and wellbeing resources
- Advocacy for Mental Health First Aid training
- 34 post event surveys completed
- Leila McDougall attendance to advocate to reduce the stigma of mental health.
- Renowned actor Damian Walshe–Howling sharing his family's own mental health struggles
- Q & A panel provided expertise and information to support mental wellbeing

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What did the event achieve

- 97% of surveyed attendees had an opportunity to connect positively with others
- 97% of surveyed attendees reflected on their own wellbeing and mental health during the afternoon
- 100% of surveyed participants found the Q & A panel informative and supportive towards improving mental health and wellbeing
- 97% of surveys said having Leila McDougall, writer, actor and producer of 'Just a Farmer', definitely made the event extra special
- Of the surveyed attendees 67% definitely and 24% somewhat said they had a greater understanding of mental health and wellbeing resources available since attending the 'Just a Farmer' event
- An economic benefit to the local community group



Feedback

- I think the impact of the film and the flow on effect of suicide was fantastic. I wish more young male farmers were in attendance as I believe they could benefit. Having Leila and Damien there gave such a better understanding of what they are trying to achieve. Well done on such a great initiative and I for one will be talking to people about the film.
- A great event and certainly mental health is something we really need to talk about.
- Was a beautiful movie and lovely Q and A!
- As a middle aged male farmer I found the film a great way to start conversation and hopefully get other male farmers talking.

Feedback continued

- I found it very enlightening & it had a very important message to get across. The general public don't really understand the importance of farming & that mental health is just as prevalent in farming as in any other industry. Very well made with an important message, so glad I attended. Thank you.