



Emma Brown, NSW — Strong Families

# Understanding help-seeking and support after suicide and accidental death in farming communities

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## Background

- ⊗ High rates of suicide & accidental death

## Guiding questions

- ⊗ What are the patterns of help-seeking demonstrated by farming families?
- ⊗ How does this influence bereavement following suicide and accidental death?

## The search for answers

- ⊗ Qualitative interviews (10 males, 14 females)



Brett Lavender, WA — Helping Hand

## We volunteer help...but we don't ask for it

*We were brought up that at 16 you are your own person. Live and die by your own decisions. So, Mum and Dad always supported us. But they didn't baby us after 16 [...] so I have been geared up to look after myself. (Jack)*



Hilary Menzies, VIC — Like Father, Hopefully Like Son

# We volunteer help...but we don't ask for it



*I am the sort of person, I will be the first one to go in and help someone out. But I will be the last one to go and ask for help. And I guess that's, to borrow a tool from a neighbour or anything like that [...] I will try and work stuff out myself. (Brendan)*

Samantha Nicholson, VIC — Where to Next Boss?



# How bereavement is affected by this pattern of help-seeking



Rene Martens, VIC — Dry Land



...where is the help I am used to  
being volunteered?

*Half way through the class I just started sobbing.  
Just asked the teacher if I could leave. I spent three  
days in the infirmary crying. And that regularly  
happened. But, like I said, still, there was no help  
(Brendan)*



Rene Martens, VIC — Tree on Farmers Land



## Asking for help is so unfamiliar...

*I've been pretty resourceful myself and if something needed doing, I would just do it myself... So I have to prepare myself mentally to ask for help when I need it because I am too independent. I will struggle on on my own and find ways to solve problems, when all I have got to do is pick up the phone. It's a real effort for me. (Paul)*



Lynette French, QLD — Do We Now Have a Plan?

# I don't know how to ask for help...



Lauren Stewart, NSW — Working away

*I thought I was getting to a place that I would never want to be...my emotional state was up and down and all over the shop...I was aware of it. But I couldn't explain it...I found myself in a very lonely spot...I felt like I was standing on the edge of a black hole...I would like to be speaking to someone and I couldn't bring myself to do it. (Jack)*



## Where volunteering help manifests as altruism...



Morag Soszka, Scotland — One boy and his dog

*I went to see him, the next day after it happened... I told him what to expect [...] I said you will have flashbacks of the persons face all the time [...] I told him a few of the things that I went through... When he went to prison, he wrote a letter... saying how much I had helped him... I guess I was sort of helping myself a bit too. I have always wanted to help other people [...] so I know I can make a difference. (Brendan)*

## Key learning...

Confirms that culture and context significantly influences the individual experience of traumatic bereavement.

## Key challenge...

How do we identify those farming males who require help?

## The twist in the tale...

Masculinist patterns of behaviour cross the gender divide.



Tracey Kruger, VIC — Are You Looking at Me?





Thank-you!



Sigrid Johnston, NSW — We're Off

Acknowledgment for the included photographs goes to entrants in the 2012 In Focus: Celebrating Farm Life photographic competition.

