‘But I’m an environmental scientist, not a mental health clinician’

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Despite clear links between the environment and health, natural resource management agencies and health services are not common collaborators. In a break with tradition, the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP), the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (SRCMA) and the Centre for Health Equity Training, Research and Evaluation (CHETRE) observed potential health impacts of work being undertaken by farmers in the Southern River Catchment, prompting a health impact assessment to further analyse these health issues.

Initial findings of the health impact assessment indicated that promoting the health of the landscape was closely linked with promoting the health, and specifically the mental health, of farmers and vice versa. These findings led to a detailed report, containing a number of key recommendations surrounding health of farmers.

This presentation will focus on the role of RAMHP in supporting the CMA staff and management to implement many of the key recommendations pertaining to mental health and wellbeing. Twelve months down the track what do the evaluations tell us about working more creatively to address the mental health of farmers and farming communities and how are our environmental scientists now feeling? The success of the program and future directions will also be discussed.