



### **Rural Alive & Well (RAW) joins with the AFL and Movember Ahead of the Game**

Rural Alive & Well (RAW) is pleased to join with the AFL as a delivery partner for Movember Ahead of the Game (AOTG) – a mental health literacy and resilience program for young people that will commence in community football clubs next month.

The AOTG program will be the largest roll out of a mental fitness program in sport globally and aims to educate young players and umpires (aged 12-18 years) and their support networks of parents, coaches, and club volunteers on the importance of mental health. Giving them tools to deal with life's challenges, and the confidence to support their mates through tough times, whilst also empowering them to look after their own mental wellbeing.

Rural Alive & Well will join 15 other community organisations from across the country to facilitate AOTG's interactive workshops to teams of young players and umpires in community football club change rooms, before, after or during training.

The program also extends to workshops for parents, coaches and club volunteers, providing opportunities to educate whole football club communities on recognising mental health challenges, identifying when to get help, and building resilience to deal with challenges in sport and life.

AFL Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Dr Kate Hall said it was great to welcome a host of delivery partners to the program.

“The AFL is thrilled to partner with Movember and work with our delivery partners to facilitate the Ahead of the Game program to hundreds of communities this year,” Dr Hall said.

“We know that grassroots football clubs around Australia provide a place for connection and belonging for young people. The AFL and Movember believe footy is a way for young Australians to learn crucial mental skills that build resilience in football and life. These skills include appreciating your team and helping out a mate”.

“We want to harness the power of our great game to help players, coaches, parents and volunteers to understand mental health, build mental fitness and strengthen resilience across the country so that we can build communities that are mentally fit and capable to handle any challenge that comes their way.”

With most common mental health conditions occurring in adolescence to mid-20s, Movember APAC Country Director, Rachel Carr said giving young people the tools to better understand mental health and mental fitness has never been more important.

“We know that 75% of all mental health conditions onset before the age of 25 years old, making these critical early intervention years. If we can connect with young people before this point and help improve



their mental health literacy and resilience, we could slow the onset and burden of mental ill health for future generations,” Carr said.

Tom Windsor, President of Rural Alive & Well (RAW) and Captain of the Mobart Mo-Bros Movember team for the past 17 years commented, “it’s fantastic to see Tasmania’s passion over so many years to improve mental health is rewarded through this partnership with Movember, AFL Tas and RAW.

RAW is perfectly placed as a program delivery partner to reach our most at-risk people and build mentally healthy and resilient rural communities.”

Barb Walters, CEO, Rural Alive & Well noted, “Early intervention is the key. To be able to be a delivery partner means that RAW is able to continue to grow the support for rural communities from an early age, ensuring that clubs and communities know support is available to each person.

Mrs. Walters commented, “Football is the heart of Tasmanian rural communities. Having been a part of football clubs my whole life, I know how important this partnership will be to not only build thriving rural communities, but Movember, AFL and RAW will now play a key role in helping develop the next generation of footballers for a national scale.”

The AOTG program will be delivered to in stages to community football clubs across all states and territories throughout the three-year partnership, with the program to begin in Victoria, NSW, Queensland, Northern Territory and Tasmania in the first year.

Community football clubs can registration their expression of interest for the first year of the AOTG program via <https://www.play.afl/aotg>