

LODDON'S BLUE TREE PROJECT

Loddon Shire

Background

The Loddon Healthy Minds Network (LHMN) plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between mental health services and the community.

By fostering awareness and education, the network empowers residents to seek help and support, thereby reducing stigma associated with mental health issues. Its advocacy efforts aim to enhance the availability and quality of mental health services in the region, addressing the unique challenges faced by a rural population.

The LHMN operates as a facilitator to support mental health stakeholders across the Loddon Shire. The network's primary role is to provide a platform that fosters collaboration, resource sharing, and the dissemination of mental health information.

While it does not deliver services directly, LHMN plays a critical role in enabling member agencies to expand their impact and coordinate efforts effectively.

Collaboration

The LHMN is composed of a diverse group of member organisations and over 60 representatives who collectively bring a wide range of expertise and perspectives to the table.

These members come from across the Loddon Shire region, reflecting the network's commitment to supporting mental health through a collaborative, community-driven approach.

“We wanted something that made sense for OUR shire, and we knew that would need to be different from what other shires have done ”



Blue Tree Project

was founded with a mission to help spark difficult conversations and encourage people to speak up when experiencing mental health concerns.

At a Glance

Challenges

- Building mental health literacy and reducing stigma in a rural context

Benefits

- A Blue Tree was developed with stakeholder consultation that is specific to the place-based challenges of the Loddon Shire
- Feedback and engagement has been overwhelmingly positive

Objectives

The Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) has supported LHMN to build preventative mental health efforts in the region in a sustainable way, through financing mental wellbeing resources, programs and projects.

One of those projects was the Blue Tree to help spark difficult conversations and encourage people to speak up when needed.

Approach

1. Develop a moveable, collapsible Blue Tree

The Loddon Blue Tree is unique in that it is bolted to a trailer that can be attached to a regular tow ball, and moved around the shire.

2. Develop resources to accompany the Tree

Banners and other resources were developed that directed the viewer towards the Blue Tree Project and the LHMN website.

3. Make it available for free hire

The blue tree, trailer and resources can be hired from the Shire by anyone seeking to raise awareness about mental wellbeing.

Possible outcomes

- As Loddon Shire has no central hub as such, being a collection of small rural towns, the design of the Blue Tree is a place-based approach that allows for maximum impact. The response from the LHMN members and community has been overwhelmingly positive.
- The Blue Tree has been present at numerous social events throughout the shire, providing a talking point, and a way for residents to engage with mental wellbeing resources and information in a destigmatising manner



Lessons learned

- Projects such as the Blue Tree need to be altered or interpreted differently for rural contexts, and the most appropriate stakeholders to engage in this work is the communities and organisations working in this context.
- LHMN has significant opportunities to expand and enhance its resource utilisation by building on existing initiatives like the Blue Tree and Smoothie Bike and integrating them into more events and campaigns to increase their impact. Tailored resource packs, co-branded materials with member agencies, and permanent visuals from the annual Art Competition can provide cost-effective, versatile tools for diverse audiences.

Next steps

The LMPHU will continue to be a member and supporter of the Loddon Healthy Minds Network, collaborate on mental wellbeing initiatives and highlight the invaluable outcomes of collaboration within the Loddon Shire.

Supporting links

[Loddon Healthy Minds website](#)

[LMPHU Mental Wellbeing priority 2025-29](#)

[LMPHU Loddon Data Profile](#)

