Welcome to the SMS4Dads Rural Newsletter

At SMS4dads, we're committed to reaching Australian fathers in rural and remote communities, where distance, geographical isolation and limited access to local services can make finding support more challenging.

We also know that fathers in these communities have just as important a role to play in their children's lives. That's why, when we had the opportunity to travel to Bourke in far Western NSW, we jumped at it!

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Taking SMS4dads to Bourke

Midwife and SMS4dads researcher, Katelyn Chapman, and SMS4DeadlyDads advisor, Craig 'Bourkie' Hammond, travelled nine hours to the Bourke Baby Expo to connect with local families, health professionals, and community organisations.

Craig 'Bourkie' Hammond, SMS4DeadlyDads advisor, seated at the SMS4dads table at the Bourke Baby Expo.

Supporting Rural Fathers Report

Bourke from the perspective of Katelyn Chapman, SMS4dads researcher and midwife;

Families and local services in rural communities play an important role in supporting parents through pregnancy and early parenthood.

However, distance from major hospitals and specialist services can create additional challenges for families seeking care and advice.

For fathers, work commitments, limited peer networks and stigma can make support harder to access.

These challenges are experienced by fathers and families in Bourke Shire, home to around 2,300 people more than 600 kilometres north-west of Sydney.

Local maternal and child health outreach services help keep care closer to home, but access to specialist services can require a four-hour trip to Dubbo or travel to Sydney.

The Bourke Baby Expo, hosted by Bourke and District Children's Services,

provided an opportunity for SMS4dads to share new antenatal resources for expectant fathers and engage with families and clinicians from across the region.

Discussions with clinicians highlighted the challenges of maintaining access to care across large geographic distances, while engagement with community members will help inform future adaptation of resources for First Nations families.

The Expo also provided an opportunity to discuss the role of digital supports in rural and remote communities.

Clinicians highlighted the challenges of connecting fathers with information and services across large distances and varied work schedules.

There was strong recognition that digital programs can complement local care by providing timely information and support directly to fathers, helping reduce some of the barriers associated with geography and service access.

While relatively few fathers attended the event due to work commitments, mothers expressed strong interest in resources that could help their partners become more involved during pregnancy and early parenthood.

The Ready to Go? quiz for expectant dads was seen as a way to encourage discussion about parenting roles, relationships and caring for a new baby.

"SMS4DeadlyDads is an amazing initiative to help empower fathers through information and support that is culturally safe and inclusive. This helps fathers in rural and remote communities to become more aware that their role is not only essential, but also valued." - *Kelly Roberts, Maternal and Child Health, Bourke Aboriginal Corporation Health Service (BACHS).*

Sending Support Straight to Rural Dads Phones

SMS4dads is a free, evidence-based text message service that is designed to reach dads wherever they are. The messages have provided practical support, encouragement, and info straight to **7057 rural fathers' phones**, and we are committed to reaching even more, no matter their distance from traditional support services.

What Rural Dads Say

We asked rural dads about their experience with SMS4dads, and these were their responses.

"Sometimes it feels like we are expected to know everything, especially in the country, so it's nice to know it's okay to ask for help."

"We have no family near us, and it was nice to have something come through frequently with little hints and tricks."

"The content would help to make me aware of things I hadn't thought about, and the texts themselves served as a reminder to focus on the fact I am a father."

"It is important to consider and reflect on parenthood. Many men wouldn't do that without prompting."

"It made me feel I wasn't alone in this journey."

Watch the video resource 'rural dads share some joys and challenges of fatherhood’ to hear about other fathers' experiences.

Click here to Watch Now

Help us Engage Rural and Remote Fathers

We want to learn from the people and organisations who support fathers and families in rural and remote Australia. If you have an idea about how we could better reach and engage rural dads, we want to hear it.

Click Here to tell us what you think

Bring SMS4dads to your community

We have a range of free SMS4dads and SMS4DeadlyDads resources available to assist health professionals, community organisations, and local services support fathers and their families. Together, we can ensure that distance is never a barrier to feeling supported and informed as a new or expectant father.

Order FREE SMS4dads Resources

Click here to receive our regular newsletter

This program is supported by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

SMS4dads

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