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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **“OUR Respite = caring for OUR Mob” An Indigenous mental health event**

Respite Services (Riverina-Murray) are hosting an Indigenous mental health awareness and information day at Tolland Community Centre in Wagga Wagga on Thursday 5 March.

This event will also feature an appearance from indigenous Australian actor and television presenter – Ernie Dingo.

ATSI Respite Specialist Jasmine Williams said "The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face many barriers in regards to accessing health care.

“Mix this with the public stigma of mental illness as well as drug and alcohol issues, and these factors all contribute to the fact that Indigenous men aged 15-25 are more likely to commit suicide than any other race or gender.

"Therefore it is vital that as a community, we provide care and support to those people with a mental illness and, as health professionals working with Indigenous people, have an understanding of these background issues as well as the rich and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture,” added Williams.

The awareness event will not only focus on issues regarding Indigenous peoples social and emotional wellbeing, but it will also showcase the many talents of the local Indigenous community to the wider population through stalls showcasing Indigenous Art, Music, Food, Stories and Dance.

Respite Services of the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc. is funded by the Australian Government under the Mental Health Respite Program. The Program offers flexible respite care options for carers and families who are caring for people with a severe mental illness.

“Respite is an important tool that can support families and friends to care for one another. The concept of respite needn’t be complicated, it’s simply about helping families who are affected by a mental illness,” says Ben Walker, Riverina Murray Respite Coordinator.

The event will take place at the Tolland Community Centre and adjacent parkland between 12pm-4pm on Thursday 5 March 2009.

For further information, please contact the Respite Services Riverina Murray team on 0447 476 445 or email [jasmine.williams@sfns.org.au](mailto:jasmine.williams@sfns.org.au)

**Ends**

*For further information please contact Iain Robinson, Communications Officer on (02) 9879 2600 or 0419 436 967.*