

Books on prescription—words for wellbeing

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A new initiative for Broome and the Kimberley, developed by Boab Health Services Counselling team.

One in five Australians aged 16 to 85 years had a mental disorder in 2007, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Boab Health Services counselling team and the Broome Library will soon be offering the opportunity for people experiencing the symptoms of mild to moderate depression and anxiety, as well as other mental health problems, to learn more about their condition, and gain a better understanding of what may help. This innovative approach, called 'bibliotherapy', provides a free, easy-to-access alternative method of obtaining psychological support, information and strategies.

The first 'books on prescription' scheme, which offers the loan of high-quality mental health self-help materials through libraries, was set up in the UK in 2004 by Dr Neil Frude.

The use of books and other self-help materials in the treatment of illness or personal problems is well known. In fact, books and other forms of self-help are now recognised as important components of treatment for people experiencing depression, anxiety, and other disorders.

Importantly, however, the books that will be on loan through the Broome Library have been recommended by a panel of expert psychologists in the UK, with other materials added by the counselling services team. For example, some of the other resources available for loan through the scheme will include a range of recommended videos, with the permission of beyondblue, who developed them.

Some of the problems that are addressed in the books and other resources include depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, anger, relationship issues, grief and trauma, amongst others.

Accessing the scheme is easy. Those working with a local GP or mental health professional may be offered a 'prescription' of various recommended texts videos or other materials. Anyone else who may wish to access the resources can join the Broome Library, and borrow the books and videos through library membership.

