



Principal community visitor Maurice Corcoran with community visitor Ingrid Davies, volunteer Ron Oliver and Riverland mental health support worker Tammy Stephenson during a recent visit to the Riverland Mental Health Unit to ensure patients and staff have access to and are providing the best care possible.

PHOTO: Will Slee

# State initiative helps mental health patients

**JAYME KOCH**

RIVERLANDERS are being encouraged to be part of improving local mental health services by becoming a community visitor through an SA Health initiative.

The South Australian Community Visitor Scheme aims to protect the rights of people experiencing an acute mental illness and people with a disability who live in a disability accommodation facility or a supported residential facility.

On December 14, principal community visitor Maurice Corcoran visited the Riverland Mental Health Unit and was pleased with how the integrated unit was working.

"The Community Visitor Scheme helps mental health care facilities work to a high

standard," he said.

"Community visitors attend health service providers around the state and have conversations with staff and patients to see how they are going and if they are being treated well.

"If any issues or concerns are discovered then they are discussed with a senior manager on site."

Mr Corcoran said the scheme was looking for locals to become community visitors.

"We are trying to get more people in country areas to become involved," he said.

"We'd love and welcome people who have lived with a mental illness or who have experiences with someone with a mental illness or disability.

"We recruit people to undertake that role, which is quite a vigorous screening process."

Community visitors attend sites in pairs and report anything that is working well or could be improved to help maintain a high standard of care.

Riverland Mental Health support worker Tammy Stephenson said the initiative helped ensure staff and patients were receiving the best care possible.

"They visit here once a month," she said.

"Their reasons for coming are basically to inspect facilities and basically take care of any issues that may be raised by staff or patients.

"We are a consumer-centred facility and we like our patients to be directing their care as well, so it's important that their voices are heard."

For more information or to become a community visitor visit [www.sa.gov.au/cvs](http://www.sa.gov.au/cvs).