

## Weathering Well App Product Information

**Name of digital mental health service:** Weathering Well App

**Name of service provider:** Menzies School of Health Research

**Date of last service update:** Weathering Well Version 3.0.43 was released in November 2021. Weathering Well is also subject to a continuous safety and quality assurance process that informs ongoing enhancements and maintenance as required.

**Date this form was completed:** June 2025

### 1. Is this service for me?

The Weathering Well app has been adapted from the Stay Strong app, with help from Western Queensland PHN, to meet the needs of people from rural farming communities. It is designed for use by financial counsellors, Health Workers, nurses, GPs, allied health professionals and a broad range of other workers who support wellbeing for people from these communities.

It offers a structured, strengths based behavioural intervention for people aged 13 and over. It involves four steps – identify support people, things that keep you strong, worries and setting goals for lifestyle changes.

#### 1.1. What health conditions does this service offer help with?

The Weathering Well app can help people who want to build and maintain good social and emotional wellbeing. It can help people who may want to set some lifestyle goals for better health and wellbeing.

#### 1.2. Who is the service intended for?

Weathering Well is a motivational care planning tool that assists health professionals and workers to promote wellbeing for people from farming communities by considering their social supports, strengths, worries and the goals or changes they would like to make. It supports workers to facilitate delivery of a structured brief intervention and can be used in clinical and community settings.

It is specifically designed for people from rural areas or farming communities aged 13 or over and who would like to:

- build or maintain good health and wellbeing
- set goals for lifestyle changes

#### 1.3. What kind of assistance does the service offer?

Weathering Well offers service providers a structured, low intensity brief intervention that can be used as a self-management and care planning tool. The Weathering Well brief intervention is adapted from the Stay Strong approach which draws together therapeutic elements of problem-solving therapy and motivational interviewing to form a brief low intensity cognitive behavioural treatment delivered in 20-30 minutes<sup>1</sup>. The intervention is not only 'therapy' but concurrently provides a brief mental health assessment and care plan, and incorporates an efficient referral

process, aligning with the Australian Government primary health stepped care model. The therapy involves 4 steps: 1) discuss family and friends that keep you strong, 2) talk about strengths, 3) discuss worries and 4) set goals for change <sup>2</sup>.

#### 1.4. How is the service delivered?

The service is clinician supported digital mental health tool delivered via a mobile application (i.e app).

#### 1.5. Are health professionals involved in delivering the service?

The Weathering Well app has been designed as a clinician supported digital mental health tool that supports service providers to deliver a culturally adapted, strengths based brief intervention for farming communities. The app is available on tablet and smartphone devices so while it may be accessible to individuals it is primarily designed for use by workers to support a wellbeing conversation.

#### 1.6. How much does the service cost? Is there any ongoing cost?

Weathering Well is free to download and use but it does require a working internet connection or data for its initial download and installation. It does not require ongoing internet or data once installed.

(Apple installed: ~327.7 MB; Android installed: ~327.7 MB)

#### 1.7. How can I access the service?

To download the Weathering Well app users will need:

- A smart phone or tablet device (iOS 11+ or Android 5+)
- A stable internet connection or data on their device for downloading the app. Weathering Well does not require ongoing internet or data once installed.

Other users may be able to access the app through their service provider if their service provider can download the app as above.

#### 1.8. Can I access the service anonymously?

When users download the Weathering Well app, they are asked to register with an email address and input their service/organisation and set up a username and password. This personal information is collected within the app. It is used to create a local login account and to reset the password if needed. It is not exported from the app or used for any other purpose. This local account can be deleted by the user at any time from within the app.

#### 1.9. Does the service allow my carer, family member or support person to work with me to use the service?

Yes, the app allows carer/family member or support person to be involved when using the service.

### Will I benefit if I use this service?

#### 1.10. Is there any independent scientific evidence of benefit from using this service?

Two research studies using the gold standard randomised controlled trial (RCT) research methodology have shown that the 4 step Stay Strong brief intervention approach that Weathering Well is based on is safe and effective at reducing symptoms of distress and depression.

A 2021 RCT found those with high distress or depression scores at baseline showed clinically significant improvement at 3 and 6 months follow up

[Effectiveness of Wellbeing Intervention for Chronic Kidney Disease \(WICKD\): results of a randomised controlled trial - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

In 2009 a mixed methods study with a RCT component demonstrated effectiveness of the Stay Strong approach as a brief intervention for reducing substance misuse, and mental health symptoms.

[Approach to treatment of mental illness and substance dependence in remote Indigenous communities: results of a mixed methods study - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

In addition, health professionals and workers report that their clients are likely to benefit from this service

[Full article: "Like Drawing Into Sand": Acceptability, Feasibility, and Appropriateness of a New e-Mental Health Resource for Service Providers Working With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

[Evaluation of a culturally adapted training course in Indigenous e-mental health - Kylie M Dingwall, Stefanie Puszka, Michelle Sweet, Patj Patj Janama Robert Mills, Tricia Nagel, 2015 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

#### 1.11. Is the service endorsed by a government or professional body?

The Stay Strong app was adapted by Menzies School of Health Research in collaboration with Western Queensland PHN, to develop the Weathering Well app with relevant wording and imagery changed to reflect the needs of farming communities impacted by drought and other adverse weather events. It is currently hosted on the Australian Government [Medicare mental Health](#) website and training in the app has been supported by PHNs and the Australian government since 2013 through the [eMental Health in Practice](#) Support Service.

### 2. Could this service do me harm?

#### 2.1. Are there any precautions or safety warnings related to this service?

The Weathering Well app does not provide medical advice. It is intended for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis and treatment. The app is best used in conjunction with a counsellor, GP, mental health professional or other wellbeing worker.

Discussion of mental health related topics has potential to trigger emotional distress or discomfort. It is possible that some users may find the content challenging or stressful.

#### 2.2. Has anyone reported concerns or adverse health events after using this service?

Menzies is not aware of any reports of adverse health events or consumer concerns about the Weathering Well app.

### 3. Should I trust this service?

#### 3.1. What is the business model for the service provider?

Menzies School of Health Research (ABN 70 413 542 847) ("Menzies") is a charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and is dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians. Menzies built the Weathering Well app to improve the reach and utilisation of digital mental health supports, particularly in rural/remote areas and farming



communities in response to a request from Western Queensland PHN. The app is available free of charge, there is no commercial model or intent. This app is provided by Menzies and is intended for use as is.

### 3.2. How does the service make money?

Menzies is primarily funded through research grants. The development of Weathering Well was funded through drought relief funding delivered through the Western Queensland PHN. The app is provided for use at no cost to consumers and does not currently produce any income.

## 4. Is the service easy to use? Will I keep using it?

### 4.1. Is there any independent research on how easy it is to use this service?

Qualitative research studies have investigated consumer views on the Stay Strong app (from which Weathering Well is derived) and have reported that service providers and consumers have found the app easy to use.

[JMIR Formative Research - Using the Stay Strong App for the Well-being of Indigenous Australian Prisoners: Feasibility Study](#)

[Full article: "Like Drawing Into Sand": Acceptability, Feasibility, and Appropriateness of a New e-Mental Health Resource for Service Providers Working With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

Consumers have also reported that the Stay Strong app is an acceptable way to enhance services for First Nations people.

[Journal of Medical Internet Research - Acceptability of Mental Health Apps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: A Qualitative Study \(jmir.org\)](#)

An initial evaluation has been published on the development and use of Weathering Well

[The Weathering Well App, A New Low Intensity Digital Mental Health Intervention for Australian Farmers: Formative Research | Research Square](#)

### 4.2. How much time will it take me to use this service as suggested?

Weathering Well is designed as a brief intervention. Ideally a Weathering Well conversation would occur over two twenty-minute sessions 1-2 weeks apart and supported by a therapist or other wellbeing worker. The app incorporates four steps, talking about the people who keep you strong, the things that keep you strong, the things that take away your strength and setting some goals for lifestyle change.

### 4.3. How long will it take to get results from using this service?

Clinical trials have demonstrated improvements at 3 and 6 months following two 20-minute sessions with the Stay Strong app (from which Weathering Well is derived). It is possible that benefits might occur sooner than 3 months.

### 4.4. Were people with lived experience involved in developing the service?

Menzies' *Stay Strong* program is built on over 20 years of grass roots consultation and collaboration with community with the aim to improve understanding, skills and access to mental health information, support and resources. Since 2003, the Stay Strong program has used codesign to explore cross cultural understandings of mental health and wellbeing with Aboriginal mental health workers and consumers, in order to develop strategies for effective mental health

promotion and intervention. The Stay Strong approach (upon which the Weathering Well app is based) promotes wellbeing through delivery of a holistic, trauma-informed brief intervention which values trust, emphasises strengths, and empowers individual choice<sup>3-5</sup>. Our recent clinical trial adapted and tested the Stay Strong app in the haemodialysis setting in Alice Springs and Darwin and found the app was effective in addressing wellbeing concerns and depressive symptoms of First Nations people<sup>6,7</sup>. Pitjantjatjara has been incorporated into the app in response to user feedback, with other adaptations and First Nations languages to come.

#### 4.5. Will this service link with other health services?

The Weathering Well app is designed to be used by health and wellbeing workers to build rapport and support a culturally relevant, structured wellbeing conversation. It does not explicitly link to other health services, but can allow streamlined referral to other services. The information entered into the app can be transferred securely into organisations information systems should the user choose.

### 5. Who will have access to my personal data?

#### 5.1. What information does the service collect about me?

We are committed to the protection of your privacy while using the app. In order to access some specific features of the app, you are required to provide some personal information. The information that we collect is used only for providing, improving and evaluating the app. We are interested in how well the app is engaging users, ease of use and how we can improve different aspects to ensure it remains of the highest safety and quality and provides maximum benefit to users. Only non-identifiable aggregated data is used for these purposes. Ethics approval is granted from the Human Research Ethics Committee for the NT Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research (approval number 2018-3280) for evaluation purposes.

Data is collected from both Registered app users (usually a service provider) and non-registered users (usually a client of the service provider). **Registered users** are required to provide some personally identifiable information: name, organisation, email address, username, and password. This personal information is collected within the app. It is used to create a local login account and to reset the password if needed. Apart from organisation name, it is not exported from the app or used for any other purpose. This local account can be deleted by the user at any time from within the app. The app also requests permission to access your camera. Permission is only required if you choose to use the functionality available to include a photo in the app. This is optional. This information is only stored locally on your device in the app.

The app also requests permission from **non-registered users** to collect personal information. If permission is granted the non-registered service user will have opportunity to input name, gender, year of birth, postcode, family or relationships, strengths, worries and goals for change information, and to complete a brief wellbeing outcome measure. This non-registered service user data is retained within the app on the device. Entering this data is optional and can be deleted by the user.

Non-registered users can grant permission for their non-identifiable (anonymous) data (gender, year of birth, postcode, family or relationships, strengths, worries, goals for change and wellbeing outcome measures) to be exported from the app to a database for evaluation purposes. Permission can be withdrawn by unselecting the 'collect information' option within the app. The information collected is stored in a secure database which is only accessible to the Menzies Weathering Well app development team.

Session start and end times are also recorded.

### 5.2. Who is that information shared with and why?

We will not use or share your information with anyone except as described in our Privacy Policy. We will not use or share information for advertising, marketing, or other purposes. We may employ third-party companies and individuals due to the following reasons:

- To facilitate our app;
- To provide the app on our behalf;
- To perform app-related services; or
- To assist us in analyzing how our app is used.

We want to inform users of this app that these third parties may have access to REGISTERED USERS personal information and non-registered users non-identifiable information. The reason is to perform the tasks assigned to them on our behalf. However, they are obligated not to disclose or use the information for any other purpose.

### 5.3. Where is information about me stored?

We are using a service called Firebase by Google to store the data. All data is stored in Cloud Firestore ("australia-southeast1" region) which is a database service offered by Firebase. Firebase services encrypt data in transit using HTTPS. Data is also encrypted at rest. More information and a link to their privacy policy can be found here: <https://firebase.google.com/support/privacy>

### 5.4. Can I easily share my information and results if I want to?

Information entered into the app can be shared securely via email or secure file transfer with the non-registered users' consent. Sessions can be exported from one device and imported onto another device to allow continuity of care.

### 5.5. Can I save the personal information I enter on my device without it being shared with the provider?

Yes, as described above, registered users' personal information remains stored on the local device. Non-registered users data is also stored on the local device. Non-registered users would need to tick the box to consent to the collection of information prior to the data being transferred to the app database described above.

### 5.6. Can I review and/or delete data that has been collected about me?

A user can revoke consent within the app and/or request deletion of data through contacting the Menzies Weathering Well app development team. Requests can only be actioned if enough detail is given to accurately identify the relevant users' information in the database. Contact information is available in this privacy policy, on the Menzies website and on the App store information. All requests will be promptly addressed.

### 5.7. Does the service have a data-sharing (privacy) policy?

Detailed information about how Menzies uses, discloses and otherwise handles personal information can be found here <https://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Policies/>

The privacy policy for the Weathering Well app is also available from the Menzies website [Weathering Well Privacy Policy - Menzies](#)



### 5.8. What security measures are in place to protect my personal information?

We value your trust in providing us your Personal Information; thus, we are striving to use commercially acceptable means of protecting it such as only collecting non-identifiable data and encrypting data in transit and at rest. But remember that no method of transmission over the internet, or method of electronic storage is 100% secure and reliable, and we cannot guarantee its absolute security.

## 6. Who can I contact with questions or concerns about this service?

### 6.1. How can I contact the service provider?

The Weathering Well app development team can be contacted at: [weatheringwell@menzies.edu.au](mailto:weatheringwell@menzies.edu.au)

### 6.2. Where can I go if I have concerns about this service? –

- For privacy/security issues contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints/>
- For complaints against a health service contact your state or territory health complaints organisation <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/notifications/further-information/health-complaintsorganisations.aspx>
- For complaints against an individual registered health professional contact the Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority (AHPRA) <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications/Raise-a-concern.aspx>
- For complaints about misleading claims contact Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) <https://www.accc.gov.au/consumers/complaints-problems/make-a-consumer-complaint>

## References

1. Laliberté A, et al. Low intensity CBT with indigenous consumers: creative solutions for culturally appropriate mental health care. In: Bennet-Levy J, Richards D, et al., editors. Oxford Guide to Low Intensity CBT Interventions Oxford Guides in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; 2010. p. 577-85.
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4. Povey J, et al. Acceptability of Mental Health Apps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: A Qualitative Study. J Med Internet Res. 2016;18(3):e65.
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