



2019 Blue Voices Member Survey

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the 2019 Blue Voices Member Survey in June 2019. You gave us lots of great feedback that we will be using to help celebrate what you do and continue to improve the Blue Voices program.

For those of you who just want to know what we will be doing as a result of the survey, you can skip all the detail and head straight to the 'What this all means' section.

If you are curious to know what members told us in the survey, use the table of contents below to go to the sections of most interest.

If you have any questions or comments, please email us (Janelle and Helen) at bluevoices@beyondblue.org.au.

Contents

Who completed the survey?	2
What's working well	2
What you like about being a Blue Voices member:	2
The value and impact of Blue Voices.....	2
Guiding principles for Blue Voices membership.....	3
Areas for improvement	4
Other things you mentioned	5
Your interests and involvement	5
Activities you're interested in.....	5
Topics you're interested in	6
Reasons you don't participate in activities.....	6
Other community involvement programs you are linked in with	7
Your thoughts on recent changes and ideas	7
Blue Voices private forum	7
Public consultations.....	7
Building your skills	8
What this all means	8
What we will continue to do	8
Changes ahead.....	8
What we need from you.....	9

Who completed the survey?

We had 187 Blue Voices members complete the survey which is 3% of the current membership and 9% of the average number of members who open our weekly communications. It was great to see that the location, age, and mental health experience diversity across respondents was representative of our current membership. The mental health experience representation included 92% of respondents having a personal experience, 53% supporting someone with a personal experience and 12% working professionally in the mental health sector.

What's working well

It was wonderful to read what you get out of being part of Blue Voices. Understanding what you like and value as a Blue Voices member helps us to know what we are doing well, what we need to keep doing and any areas for improvement.

What you like about being a Blue Voices member:

- The opportunity to make a difference – being heard and contributing to change.
- The variety of activities – that there are different types of activities to get involved in.
- Flexibility of the program – choosing the opportunities that are right for you. Many of you specifically told us you like the online activities that can be done in your own time.
- Regular communication from the team – being kept up to date on opportunities and mental health news
- External opportunities – learning about opportunities being run by other organisations.

In your words

- *I like the surveys that can be completed around my busy schedule, depending on my own mental health on the day. :) along with juggling my children's schooling, appointments and life in general.*
- *It's my opportunity to use my experiences to build better programs and projects.*

The value and impact of Blue Voices

We were pleased to see that most of you felt that the voices of those affected by anxiety, depression and/or suicide are important to Beyond Blue. That is, after all, why Blue Voices exists. Equally, there were strong positive responses to how members feel Beyond Blue values your voice, how you can make a difference as a Blue Voices member, how connected you feel to the work and purpose of Beyond Blue and that for most of you, being part of Blue Voices positively impacts your mental health.

In your words

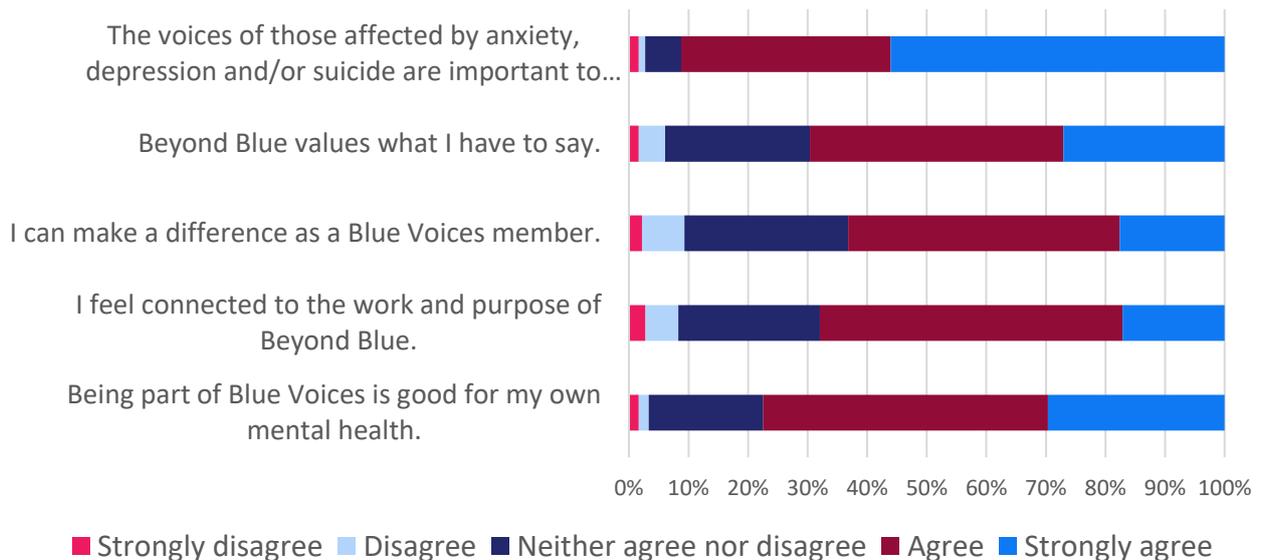
- *Blue Voices gives me an opportunity to help shape the organisation and provide direct feedback, which is almost unheard of outside of Beyond Blue. It's incredibly satisfying to be part of a team and feel valued.*
- *Being involved helps with a building of self-esteem and a sense of being worthwhile.*
- *I like having my voice actually count towards something.*
- *Sharing my opinions and experiences makes me feel valued as a contributor.*

Those of you who participated in activities within 12 months prior to completing the survey, told us you've noticed an improvement in us giving you feedback. This included feedback on how your involvement influenced the project, and ongoing updates on where the project or product was at.

In your words

- *I received a big thank you from the Blue Voices activity organiser and a follow-up phone call on what I thought of the whole experience*

Perception of impact and value as a Blue Voices member

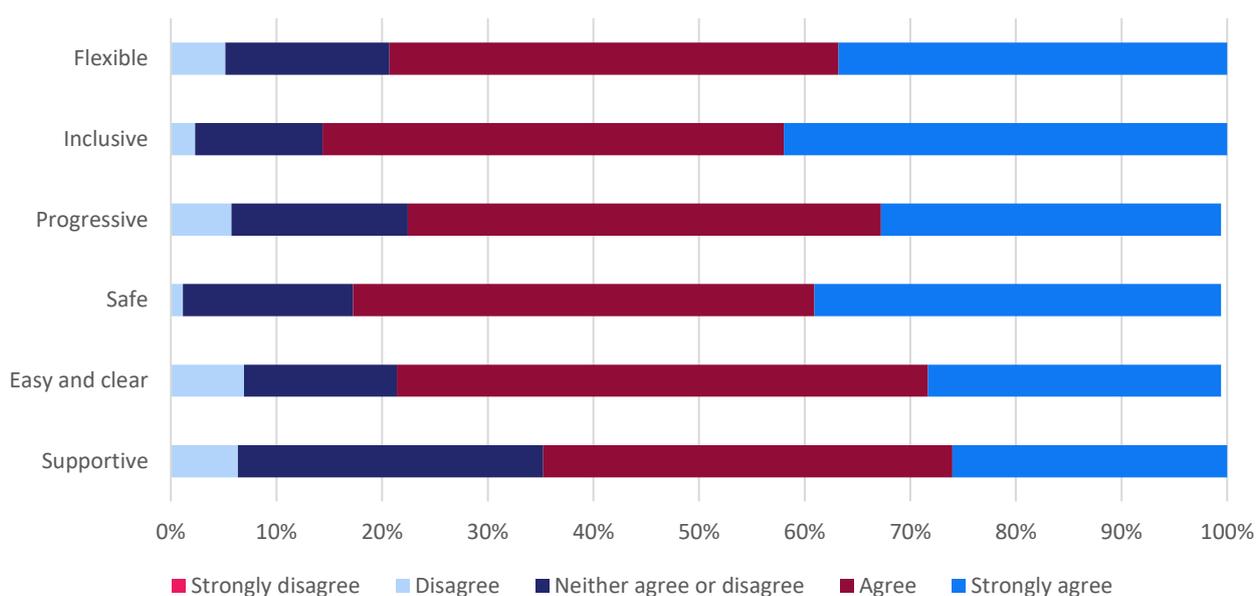


Guiding principles for Blue Voices membership

We wanted to know how we were going against the guiding principles for Blue Voices membership. These guiding principles were co-designed by members during the 2018 Blue Voices Evaluation project. As a reminder, the values are:

Principle	Description
Flexible	Blue Voices members can engage in opportunities when it suits their interests, availability and current situation.
Inclusive	Blue Voices membership is open to anyone across Australia, 16 years and older, affected by anxiety, depression or suicide, including supporters and carers. Members are valued for their expertise, opinions and diversity.
Progressive	Beyond Blue is progressive, active and forward-thinking. The availability of a range of activities enable Blue Voices members to help shape mental health policy, programs and services in a variety of ways.
Safe	Blue Voices members and participants can trust that their privacy and safety is always a priority for Beyond Blue.
Easy and clear	The purpose of Blue Voices and the opportunities available are clearly communicated, and it is easy for members to participate in activities.
Supportive	Beyond Blue helps Blue Voices members build skills and confidence in their ability to participate. Members feel encouraged and supported.

Beyond Blue achievement against Guiding Principles



Areas for improvement

The Blue Voices program will always be looking at ways we can improve your experience and the impact of your voices in everything we do.

What you'd like us to improve

It is encouraging to read that the areas you told us we could be doing better; are also the areas you have seen ongoing improvements. These include:

- **Feedback:** Continuing to improve our feedback processes to help you understand how your voice has made a difference.
- **Building your skills:** Understanding what skills you would like help in developing and how we can help you do that. First skill area identified by you was applying for and sitting on committees.
- **More activities:** You want more activities. We want that too. We will continue to work with our project teams to identify a variety of ways you can be involved, and share activities being run by other organisations.
- **Timing and/or location of activities:** You told us that you want activities run in your area and activities at times you can participate (e.g. not during business hours).
- **Easy and clear:** Though this was not significantly highlighted as something we needed to work on, this is an area we will continue to focus on.

In your words

- *I'm not able to participate in any face-to-face opportunities as they're all during business hours and I work full-time.*
- *Some opportunities are only available to people in metropolitan areas.*
- *Feedback - I would like more communication as to what stage the activity/project is at and the outcomes.*
- *I think feedback could be improved – to see what difference we made.*

Other things you mentioned

- **Technology challenges:** We know our Blue Voices online platform is not as great as it could be. At this time, we are limited by our current technology, but we continue to work towards making it even easier for you to be in control of your Blue Voices experience online.
- **External activity feedback:** Many of you mentioned you were not happy with how other organisations were providing (or not providing) feedback on your involvement. We don't have control over what other organisations do, but we encourage you to provide your feedback directly to the relevant organisation.

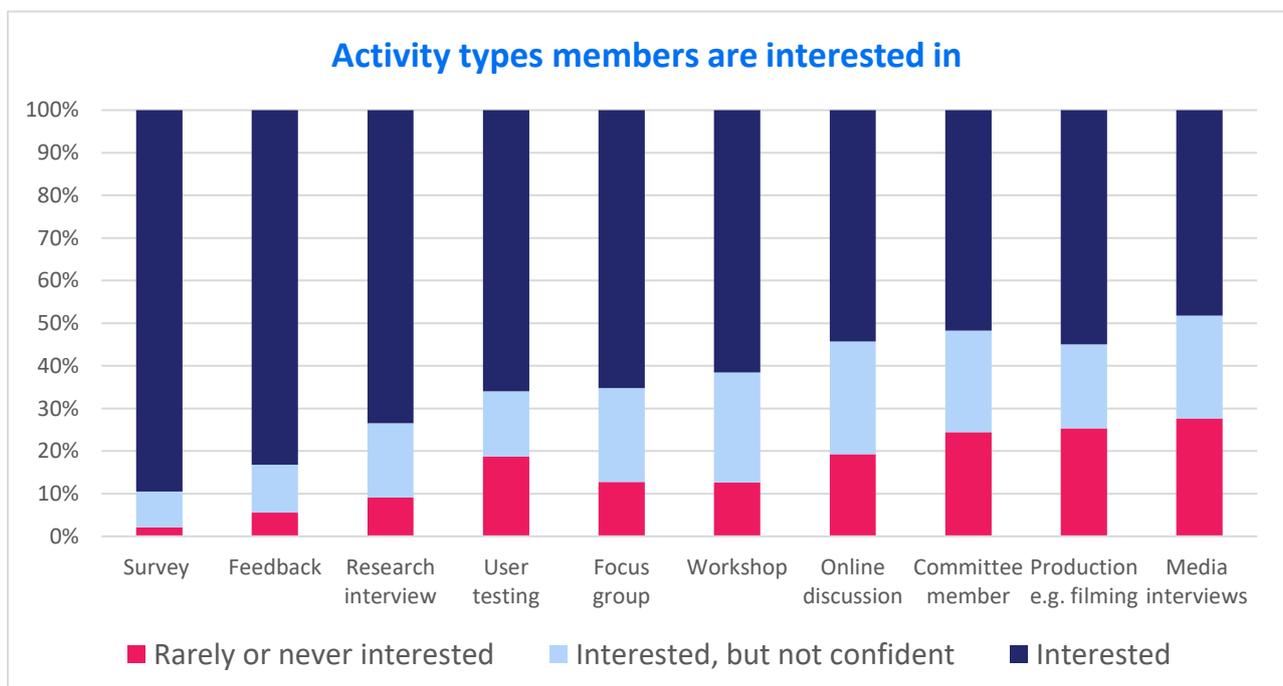
Your interests and involvement

In addition to telling us about your experience, you also told us about your interests and why you might not participate in activities.

Activities you're interested in

Blue Voices offers a range of different types of activities for member involvement. We wanted to know the type of activities you're interested in and most likely to participate in. What we saw was:

- The highest level of interest and confidence was for activities that are **easy to do in your own time, often offer some level of anonymity, and rarely involve interaction with other members**. These activities include surveys, providing feedback by phone, questionnaire or email, research interviews, and user-testing.
- The next grouping of activity types that members were likely to participate in, involve more **connection between participants**. These activities included focus groups, workshops and online discussions.
- The final group of activities that members had a lower level of interest and/or confidence to participate in were either **public facing** or contributing at a **governing level**. These activities include being a committee member, being involved in media productions such as filming or photoshoots or being interviewed by media.



Topics you're interested in

We asked you what topics or areas of work you were interested in contributing to at Beyond Blue.

Area/topic	Member interest
Anxiety and anxiety conditions	81%
Depression	89%
Suicide and suicide prevention	73%
Early intervention	57%
General wellbeing	66%
Mentally healthy workplaces	74%
Mentally healthy schools - early learning to high school	59%
Mentally healthy families - for families with children 0 to 16	47%
Peer support programs and methods – Beyond Blue's community forums	60%
Community engagement programs - speakers, volunteers	67%
Fundraising methods and promotion	34%
Reducing stigma around mental health	78%
Policy and system level change	50%
Other	4%

Reasons you don't participate in activities

We asked you to tell us why you might not participate in Blue Voices activities. One of the benefits of this program is that you decide what activities are right for you. That is why we don't expect you to complete a minimum number of activities in order to be a Blue Voices member. However, we wanted to check in with you to find out the top three reasons you might not take part in the activities available. Following are the most common reasons selected:

- Time – you either didn't read the emails in time or you didn't have the time to complete the activity.
- Relevance – the activities on offer weren't relevant to your experience or skills.
- Location – the face-to-face activities you were interested in were not being held in your area.
- Health – you were not well enough at the time to participate in activities.

In your words

- *Wish I had more time to contribute and help!*
- *There are times I'm unable to help because of things going on in my life.*
- *I forget to look at the activities frequently, and then miss out some that I may have liked to have participated in.*
- *Some of the information is not relevant to me, which is OK because it is probably relevant to others.*
- *I had hoped to contribute something but have not seen a relevant opportunity.*

Other community involvement programs you are linked in with

Blue Voices isn't the only program you can join to be alerted to opportunities to have your say on mental health policy, programs and services. Though we often promote activities available through other organisations, it's great to sign up yourself, just in case we miss one.

- Black Dog Institute (46)
- Suicide Prevention Australia (21)
- Consumer Health Forum (7)
- Roses in the Ocean (5)
- Orygen (7)
- Local Government – Your Say platforms (8)

Your thoughts on recent changes and ideas

We had made some recent changes and had some ideas we wanted to get your feedback on. Thank you to those who took the extra time to tell us what you thought.

Blue Voices private forum

We shared with you the changes we made to the Blue Voices private forum to refocus discussion to being about participating in Blue Voices activities. We have been trailing this new approach since March 2019.

Though some of you liked the idea of refocusing the forum, more than half of the written response to this change showed that many members are still unsure how the Blue Voices forum is different to the main forum. We get how confusing it is. With the forums looking so similar and with many Blue Voices members signing up to participate in both programs, it is very easy to confuse the both. This ongoing confusion, along with the results of the trial suggest that, at this time, the private forum is not the best tool for Blue Voices activities.

For these reasons, we will be closing the private forum at the end of this year and encourage everyone who wants to connect with others online, to post and comment in the main Beyond Blue community forums that is all about peer connection and support.

In your words

- *It is still unclear if BV is the forum or if it is opportunities to participate or both.*

Public consultations

Your response to our plans to make some of our activities open to the public was very positive. And those of you who use social media and email said you would likely share public activities with your networks to help us reach more people.

In your words

- *It's great to open it up to a wider community, as it's promoting more conversations and again, helping to reduce the stigma around talking about mental health.*
- *The more public exposure to Beyond Blue the better, creates more opportunities for recruitment and broader range of input*
- *I think it is a great idea, broadly speaking. But make sure you don't lose your BV members in the noise. Recognise that BV are likely to need more active support.*
- *Awesome initiative.*

Building your skills

We had a great response to our question to you about what types of skills you would like us to help you develop to build your confidence in participating in Blue Voices activities. Applying for and participating on committees as a Blue Voices member was a very clear area of interest for developing skills. Because you told us this, we are now working on understanding more of what you want to know and engaging those with the skills and experience to help us answer those questions for you. Watch this space!

In your words

- *I'd like to learn about sitting on a professional committee (and writing the most effective application :)*

What this all means

We know we have a great program and we want to continue to give you a variety of opportunities to help shape and guide what we do as an organisation.

What we will continue to do

We had already begun to make improvements, following the 2018 Blue Voices Evaluation, and we will continue to focus on those areas. These include:

- **Feedback process:** We will continue to work with our project teams to provide you with feedback about how your contribution has made a difference in our work.
- **Range of activities:** We continue to work with Beyond Blue staff to help them feel more capable and confident in engaging Blue Voices in a range of activities at different stages of a project or program.
- **Clear communications across all our interactions with you:** Communication includes our emails, the activity promotions on Blue Voices Connect and working with project teams to ensure they are keeping you informed in a way that is easy to understand.
- **Program flexibility:** Blue Voices will continue to be a program that offers you the flexibility to participate in activities that are relevant to your interests and availability.

In your words

- *There is a broad range of activities that come up and require feedback or input which I enjoy participating in and helping to improve mental health services in our community.*
- *I like that I can participate at times that are convenient and with areas of particular interest.*
- *Real life experiences are valued and being used to guide support for future directions.*

Changes ahead

Some of the following changes may have already happened or are expected to happen within the next 12 months.

- **Support and learning for you:** We will be working with you to develop tools to help you build skills and confidence to apply for and sit on committees.
- **Celebrating Blue Voices:** We will explore different ways to share what your fellow Blue Voices members have been doing, to give you a broader picture of how your community voices are shaping Beyond Blue.
- **An organisation-wide approach to engaging community:** The Beyond Blue Community Engagement Strategy is underway, and we will share more about this in the coming months.

- **A new member to our team:** This year we are excited to welcome a Blue Voices Community Advocate as a newly created role in our team. As someone with their own personal experience of a mental health condition, they will be joining our team to help us to support and inspire Beyond Blue staff to always be thinking about how they can involve you in our decisions and the design of what we do. We are in the process of recruitment and will keep you informed of their arrival.
- **Closing the Blue Voices forum:** After many months of testing a more focused use of the Blue Voices private forum, we have decided to close it down. We encourage everyone interested in connecting and sharing with others, to participate in Beyond Blue main community forums.

What we need from you

We want you to help us improve our processes and ways we can support you to participate in activities. Remember that you don't have to wait until we send out a member survey to give us feedback on what we are doing.

Over the next 12 to 18 months, keep an eye out for opportunities related to:

- sharing or building your skills and confidence in applying for and sitting on committees
- helping Beyond Blue design a simplified feedback framework for staff to use when keeping you in the loop of activities you are involved in.
- helping the Blue Voices team make it easy for you to regularly tell us about your experience with activities and the program.
- helping us to keep you informed of what the Blue Voices community are doing to shape what Beyond Blue's work.