Community Engagement Strategy
2020-2022
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Beyond Blue acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land in Melbourne in which our head office is based, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend our respect to all Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.
Introduction

Beyond Blue’s vision is to help all people in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whoever they are and wherever they live.

Effective community engagement is vital to achieving this vision. At Beyond Blue, our connection to the community defines who we were in the past, who we are now at our 20th anniversary in 2020, and who we will be in the future.

In 2018-19, we asked the people we currently reach – and those we don’t – to reflect on the impact of our past engagement activities and to identify opportunities to connect more effectively with the diversity of people in Australia.

This Community Engagement Strategy is the result of those discussions.

What is community engagement at Beyond Blue?

At Beyond Blue, community engagement refers to how any person or group in Australia can engage in shared purpose activities and initiatives that:

• enable them to collaborate in the design of our projects, programs and services
• empower them to make a difference
• enable meaningful connections through channels of their choice, including face to face in their local community
• enable them to achieve their best possible mental health.

Our objectives

We will strengthen our engagement with Australia’s communities, by:

• developing a closer and more effective relationship with our Blue Voices members so they can be better placed to shape the things that Beyond Blue does
• improving our recruitment, training and use of volunteers to run meaningful community activities that connect people with Beyond Blue’s products and services
• selecting and attending events that effectively connect with the diversity of Australia’s population
• better supporting our Beyond Blue Speakers and Ambassadors in their critical role in enhancing people’s understanding of mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention
• forming purposeful partnerships with other social impact organisations to benefit Australia’s communities
• providing opportunities for people whose lives have been positively impacted by Beyond Blue to realise their desire to ‘give back’ through all our participation channels, including Blue Voices, Speakers, volunteering and community fundraising for our support services.

Our engaged communities

The Australian community has been well connected with Beyond Blue over its first 20 years. People have had a choice of roles with us and our engaged community members number almost 20,000, reaching more than 2.5 million people each year through a range of engagement activities:

• We have more than 7,100 Blue Voices members whose personal experiences with anxiety, depression and / or suicide influence and guide the design, development and improvement of our work
• Our 5,000 Volunteers help us effectively manage our presence at up to 100 events and other activities each year
• More than 300 Speakers share their personal experiences, reducing stigma and encouraging conversations across Australia
• Our Ambassadors provide a public profile to help us raise awareness
• Our Community Partners use their networks and reach to connect us with new and diverse audiences
• Our 10,000+ Community Fundraisers each year galvanise others to raise funds to support Beyond Blue services.

Our Community Engagement Strategy harnesses the power of our engaged communities to help us broaden our reach, diversity and impact of those we connect with.
To achieve our strategy’s objectives, we will focus on our four community engagement pillars:

**Lived experience and community participation**
We will ensure people affected by anxiety, depression and/or suicide are able to contribute their skills and experience to the planning, design and development and evaluation of all our activities.

**Community advocacy**
We will provide the community with the support, tools and resources they need to champion and advocate for mental health issues in their communities and in doing so, empower them to make a difference.

**Reach**
We will provide inclusive engagement activities that enable meaningful connection with a wide range of people, including those who are at higher risk of depression, anxiety and/or suicide, through channels of their choice, including face to face in their local community.

**Shared benefit**
We will build relationships that have a positive impact on both Beyond Blue’s objectives and on the mental wellbeing of those who engage with us, helping them achieve their best possible mental health.
Our Strategy

Beyond Blue’s Community Engagement Strategy

Our pillars
- Lived experience and community participation
- Community advocacy
- Reach
- Shared benefit

Our programs
- Blue Voices
- Volunteers
- Speakers and Ambassadors
- Events
- Community Partnerships
- Community Fundraising

Our outcomes
- Personal experiences inform our programs and services
- Engaged, well trained and representative volunteers
- Speakers and Ambassadors with wide appeal and impact
- Relevant and inclusive presence at events
- Partnerships that engage those at higher risk
- Engaged fundraisers raise funds and awareness

Our guiding principles
- Purposeful
- Inclusive
- Timely
- Transparent
- Respectful
What we’ll do

Lived Experience and Community Participation

We will ensure that people affected by anxiety, depression and/or suicide are given opportunities to use their skills and experience to collaborate in the design of our projects, programs, policies and services.

Why this is important?

Listening to and incorporating the voice of personal experience is vital in ensuring Beyond Blue's policies, programs and activities are evidence-based and as robust as they can be. In Australia, recovery-oriented mental health services value, respect and draw on the lived experience of mental health issues of people, their families and friends, staff and the local community. There is no doubt that genuine engagement results in greater consumer and carer empowerment and ownership of mental health programs as well as effective advocacy. Beyond Blue knows our engagement activities are most impactful when the community is meaningfully involved from the beginning. Our Blue Voices members are actively interested in opportunities to participate in our work and would like to see more personalised communication about opportunities that are relevant to them and more options around how they can contribute.

How we will achieve it

We will:

• Ensure our Blue Voices members continue to inform the development and design of our policies, programs and services by continually providing a variety of ways to engage
• Diversify our Blue Voices membership to ensure the Australian population is appropriately represented
• Build our internal capacity to understand and implement effective community participation strategies across all programs
• Learn to recognise when other voices need to be heard and how to involve them.

“Beyond Blue seeks out my views and those of others with personal experience to inform its thinking when developing new policies, programs and services. I was recently on the policy reform working group which helped set the organisation’s policy advocacy agenda and informed the Beyond 2020 Strategic Plan.”

Ian
Blue Voices member, VIC

1 Capability 4B: Acknowledging, valuing and learning from people’s lived experience and from families, staff and communities, A National Framework for Recovery-Oriented Mental health Services: Guide for Practitioners and Providers, Department of Heath, 2013
2 Co-design in mental health policy, Mental Health Australia, July 2017
3 Beyond Blue community engagement strategic discussion, internal insights, May 2018
4 Blue Voices evaluation and co-design report, May 2018
Community advocacy

We will provide the community with the tools and resources they need to champion and advocate for mental health issues in the community and in doing so, empower them to make a difference.

Why this is important?
Our engaged communities join Beyond Blue because they want to be part of something bigger than themselves: they want to contribute to and create a movement within society in relation to mental health. These community members are often informal leaders within their own communities, so the opportunity exists to harness their informal authority to help them advocate for better mental health outcomes. The majority of our Blue Voices members say they have joined to offer support to others, and our volunteers believe they could do more. Other individuals and community groups who liaise with Beyond Blue in various ways are asking for better tools to identify when someone needs help and what to do about it: they want to be able to help people reach out for support.

How we will achieve it
We will:
• Understand what our engaged communities need to enable them to advocate for positive mental health outcomes in their own communities
• Provide them with tailored tools and resources
• Engage mental health champions across our community partners to embed an effective approach with their staff and audiences.

“Beyond Blue’s resources give me the tools to be an advocate for better mental health outcomes in the communities I reach through my speaking engagements.”

Sandi
Blue Voices member, Speaker and Volunteer, VIC

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5 Beyond Blue community engagement strategic discussion, engaged community insights, May 2018
6 Beyond Blue community engagement strategic discussion, engaged community insights, May 2018
7 Co-designing blueVoices report, Sticky Design Studio, May 2018
8 Beyond Blue Volunteer survey, February 2018
9 Uniting focus group: Vulnerable Australians, February 2019
Reach

We will provide appropriate, relevant and inclusive engagement activities that enable meaningful connection with a wide range of Australians, including those who are at a higher risk of anxiety, depression, and/or suicide. We will reach them through channels of their choice, including face to face in their local community.

Why this is important?

In mapping its current activities, Beyond Blue has found we are engaging with mainly heterosexual people who live in major cities and are of working age. Higher risk communities including those listed below are underrepresented in both our engaged communities and the audiences we reach:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Multicultural communities
- People living in low Socio-Economic Status regions
- LGBTI people
- Older people
- People living in rural and remote areas.

We know that globally there is a rising demand for personalised experiences over products, communications, technology and social media. In a world with increased potential for digital burnout, desire for face-to-face interaction has become essential. People feel they can be understood better when communicating face-to-face.

We also know that not everyone has easy access to technology. Our ageing population will make up a large part of the Australian community over the next decade, and has lower levels of digital engagement. We have learned that partnering with welfare agencies and local community organisations as well as going to community events and introducing speakers with personal experience are seen as the best ways to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural communities. People who live rurally don’t always have easy access to services: we need to go where they are.

How we will achieve it

We will:

- Diversify our engaged communities’ membership (Blue Voices, Speakers and Ambassadors, Volunteers, Community Fundraisers) to ensure it is more representative of the people in Australia
- Diversify our engagement activities (events, speaker engagements, volunteer activities, community partnerships) to include a focus on reaching those at higher risk of developing mental health conditions as well as the general population
- Ensure our presence at events and the information we share through events and community partnerships is relevant to our audiences.

“Through my volunteering and speaking roles on behalf of Beyond Blue, I have reached all parts of my local community, from farmers to footballers, with the message of hope, recovery and resilience.”

Lindsay
Speaker, Volunteer and Community Fundraiser, TAS

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10 Beyond Blue Community Engagement Analysis Report: data mapping our engagement activities, November 2018
11 Beyond Blue Community Engagement Analysis Report: data mapping our engagement activities, November 2018
12 Our future world: Global megatrends that will change the way we live, CSIRO, 2012
13 Our future world: Global megatrends that will change the way we live, CSIRO, 2012
14 Understanding the Digital Behaviours of Older Australians, Office of the eSafety Commissioner, May 2018
15 Beyond Blue Engaged Communities survey, February 2019
We will build relationships that have a positive impact on both Beyond Blue’s objectives and on the mental wellbeing of those who engage with us, helping them to achieve their best possible mental health.

Why this is important?
Our engaged communities have a deep connection with Beyond Blue: often they used our services when their mental health condition or that of a close family member or friend had reached a critical point. They are now committed to giving back to the organisation and to people in their community who might be experiencing the same thing. As we spoke with our engaged communities, we realised that this mutually beneficial aspect should be celebrated: Beyond Blue benefits from having almost 20,000 people across a range of activities to assist us in sharing our messages, and those 20,000 benefit through their involvement. If they have been unwell, contributing to Beyond Blue plays an important role in engaged community members’ recovery because it gives them a sense of self-worth to know they are helping others. Volunteers feel that they can make an impact on our work and their own wellbeing and many of our Blue Voices members say supporting others has supported them in their own recovery.

Global research indicates the ability to exercise control and influence can also act as a protective factor for people. In fact, self-reliance, participation in decisions, dignity and respect, and belonging and contributing to a wider community underpin a broader sense of social wellbeing and equitable health.

How we will achieve it
We will:

- Better understand the benefits our engaged communities receive when engaging with us, and work to maximise them
- Ensure the benefits continue to be two-way and encourage repeat participation and growth in engaged community numbers.

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16 Beyond Blue engagement strategic discussion, engaged community insights, May 2018
17 Beyond Blue engagement strategic discussion, engaged community insights, May 2018
18 Beyond Blue Volunteer Survey, February 2018
19 Co-designing blueVoices report, Sticky Design Studio, May 2018
20 User empowerment in mental health – a statement by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2010
21 User empowerment in mental health – a statement by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2010
Conclusion

Beyond Blue is now working to deliver the goals in this strategy - but we can’t do it in isolation. We will continue to work with our engaged communities and the organisations who have advised us so far, and other stakeholders.

We will design an evaluation framework to assess how we’re tracking, with measures to test how effective we are at involving the voice of lived experience in everything we do. We will also measure how we equip people to advocate for better mental health outcomes in their communities, diversify our reach and impact and ensure those who engage with us regard their interactions as mutually beneficial.

We understand community engagement is an ever-evolving process and will learn and adjust our approach as we progress, listening to feedback and taking the community’s advice as we work together to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health.
Thanks

Beyond Blue consulted with the below individuals and organisations in compiling this Community Engagement Strategy. They attended and facilitated workshops and focus groups, undertook research, answered surveys and/or reviewed drafts

We thank them for their valuable contribution:

Aboriginal Housing Victoria  
AMES Victoria  
Beyond Blue Community Fundraisers  
Beyond Blue Speakers  
Beyond Blue Staff  
Beyond Blue Volunteers  
Blue Voices members  
Capire Consulting  
Carers Victoria  
Centre for Cultural Diversity in Aging  
Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health  
Chronic Illness Alliance  
Good Shepherd Microfinance  
Hawthorn Football Club  
Litmus Consulting  
National LGBTI Health Alliance  
Paralympics Australia  
PricewaterhouseCoopers  
Roses in the Ocean  
Tennis Australia  
Thorne Harbour Health  
Thriving Communities Partnership  
Uniting Vic/Tas (staff, clients and contacts)  
Victorian Commissioner for Residential Tenancies
Where to find more information

Beyond Blue

Beyondblue.org.au

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service. Our trained mental health professionals will listen, provide information, advice and brief counselling, and point you in the right direction so you can seek further support.

1300 22 4636

Email or chat to us online at beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

@beyondblue
@beyondblueofficial

Head to Health

Headtohealth.gov.au

Head to Health can help you find free and low-cost, trusted online and phone mental health resources.

Donate online: beyondblue.org.au/donations

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