

10 May 2018

## Thousands of Victorian footballers to play in state-wide *beyondblue* round this weekend

More than 8000 Victorian footballers will shine a light on mental health when they play in a new state-wide AFL Victoria *beyondblue* round on May 12 and 13.

Male and female players from all levels of football across the state – from junior leagues to the Victorian Football League – will wear blue tape around their wrists to get people talking about mental health.

The round is the first event AFL Victoria will run as part of a new community partnership with *beyondblue*. It follows the annual *beyondblue* Cup which will see Hawthorn and Sydney face off in round 8 at the MCG on Friday 11 May.

Players from AFL Victoria's 6000-plus teams nominated *beyondblue* as a charity they most wanted to support as mental health was of high importance.

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** said the inaugural AFL Victoria *beyondblue* round created an opportunity for people to spark conversations about mental health with their teammates, coaches and club staff, club members and supporters, families and friends.

"The support the football community provides to players on the field is powerful and we want to encourage people to provide that same support off the field to foster good mental health," Ms Harman said.

"At some point in your life, you or someone you know is likely to have experienced depression or anxiety. They are as commonplace and treatable as physical injuries, yet people worry that talking about their mental health struggles is a sign of weakness – it's not.

"There are simple actions you can take to start working on [getting better and staying well](#). Often that starts with reaching out to someone you trust and asking for support."

Ms Harman said having regular conversations with family, friends and teammates about mental health helps to break down stigma, helps people to stay well and encourages those who are experiencing depression or anxiety to seek help.

"Talking about mental health is the game changer," Ms Harman said.

**AFL Victoria CEO Steven Reaper** said he is looking forward to the Victorian football community supporting the work of *beyondblue* this weekend.

"AFL Victoria is proud to partner with *beyondblue* in 2018 to start conversations, reduce stigma and increase support-seeking for anxiety, depression and suicide prevention within the football community," Reaper said.

"Last year AFL Victoria consulted with our leagues and identified that mental health was one of the leading priorities for both players and supporters. In partnership with *beyondblue*, AFL Victoria is working towards educating the football community on mental health and wellbeing.

"Our regions and leagues do a fantastic job supporting players, teams and clubs who may be facing their own issues.

"There is a much greater opportunity for social impact and change with a coordinated approach across the football community, and we look forward to *beyondblue* being supported at all levels this weekend – AFL, VFL, TAC Cup and community football."

For more information, visit [beyondblue.org.au/AFLVicbeyondblueRound](http://beyondblue.org.au/AFLVicbeyondblueRound)

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The *beyondblue* Support Service is available by phone 24/7 on **1300 22 4636** or online chat [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support) (3PM – 12AM AEST) or email responses.

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