

12 September 2018

***beyondblue* welcomes first responder mental health support**

beyondblue welcomes election commitments by both sides of politics to support the mental health of Victorian police and emergency services personnel.

The commitments come just weeks from the launch of a landmark *beyondblue* study that will lay the foundations to support those who risk their lives to protect others.

More than 21,000 volunteers and serving and retired employees from ambulance, fire, police, rescue and state emergency services participated in *beyondblue*'s National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services.

beyondblue will use the findings – to be released in late November – to work with all agencies to reduce the risk factors that contribute to poor mental health and suicide risk.

***beyondblue* Chair Julia Gillard** said it was pleasing to see this important issue gain widespread recognition.

"*beyondblue* has been concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel for some time and we look forward to being involved in Victoria, and every state and territory, for years to come," Ms Gillard said.

"These men and women are always there when we need them most, putting their lives on the line to keep us safe.

"The community can be encouraged that the mental health of our police and emergency services personnel is being taken seriously, and that *beyondblue* will continue to work with all parties diligently to ensure our protectors are protected."

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** welcomed the Andrews Government's four-part proposal from piloting new approaches to creating a new Centre of Excellence for Emergency Worker Mental Health.

"We were delighted to be approached by the Victorian Government to be a founding partner of its Centre of Excellence for Emergency Worker Mental Health. This gives *beyondblue* an opportunity to work with others, share our knowledge and new service models, to achieve the best outcomes for all," Ms Harman said.

"*beyondblue* is ready to work with any government that wants to focus on the mental health of police and emergency services personnel. As such, we also welcome the Victorian Opposition's proposal to expand support for first responders."

Mental health professionals are available at the *beyondblue* Support Service via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST) or email responses (within 24 hours).

Contact: *beyondblue*

Sandro Olivo (03) 9810 6139 / 0488 500 487

media@beyondblue.org.au

beyondblue

PO Box 6100 Hawthorn West VIC 3122

beyondblue Support Service 1300 22 4636

www.beyondblue.org.au