



Media Release

7 October 2018

Beyond Blue welcomes Productivity Commission's mental health inquiry

Beyond Blue welcomes the Federal Government's announcement that a Productivity Commission inquiry will investigate the role of mental health in the Australian economy and the best ways to improve people's wellbeing nationally.

Last week, the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed 3128 people took their own lives in 2017, which represents a 10-year high in the suicide rate and an increase of 9.1 per cent over the previous year.

Mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety, affect four million Australians every year.

With opportunities for work, education and stable housing – underpinned by timely and adequate support and treatment – these people can contribute massively to the economy, to society and to their local community. Currently too many are locked out of these opportunities.

Mental ill health can have a significant impact on workplace participation, productivity and business outcomes.

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said the Productivity Commission inquiry had the potential to significantly improve outcomes for millions of individuals and their families and benefit the economy.

"There have been numerous investigations and reviews into mental health in Australia, but this is the first time the Productivity Commission will take the lead. It is a significant step forward and one that has the potential to drive real change," Ms Harman said.

"This announcement reflects what the mental health sector has been calling for; that the impacts of mental health be recognised as a fundamental and core part of governments' economic and productivity agenda."

Beyond Blue, through its advocacy and Heads Up workplace mental health program, has been pushing for employers of all sizes to take the mental health of their workforces as seriously as physical safety at work.

"Ninety-one per cent of employees believe mentally healthy workplaces are important. However, only 52 percent of employees believe their workplace is mentally healthy," Ms Harman said.

"We know that mental ill health costs the economy \$60 billion a year, but we also know that businesses receive an average return on investment of \$2.30 for every \$1 they invest in effective workplace mental health strategies.

"Life opportunities and economic prospects improve when we are mentally healthy because we are more likely to get a good education, find safe and secure housing and a fulfilling job that enables us to contribute to the community.

"People are more likely to stay in their jobs, be productive and engaged at work and less likely to take time off work if they are mentally healthy. The flow on macroeconomic and social impacts can be profound."

Mental health professionals are available at the Beyond Blue 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: Beyond Blue

Sandro Olivo (03) 9810 6139 / 0488 500 487

Cheryl Balfour (03) 9818 9253/ 0434 356775
media@beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue
PO Box 6100 Hawthorn West VIC 3122
Beyond Blue Support Service 1300 22 4636
www.beyondblue.org.au