

23 September 2019

Beyond Blue announces new board directors

Beyond Blue has welcomed three new board directors and thanked two dedicated outgoing members for their service.

From December, Indigenous leader **Russell Taylor AM**, experienced farmer **Derek Schoen** and Western Australia-based KPMG partner **Denise McComish** will join the Beyond Blue board.

Their appointments follow the retirement at the 2019 annual general meeting of two of Beyond Blue's long serving directors, **Professor Steve Larkin** and **Deputy Chair Tim Marney**.

Beyond Blue Chair the Hon Julia Gillard AC said over the past decade, Mr Marney had made an outstanding contribution to Beyond Blue's efforts advancing the nation's understanding of anxiety, depression and suicide.

"Tim's community focus has been instrumental to Beyond Blue's advocacy for system reform," Ms Gillard said. "He is passionate about mental health literacy, particularly around anxiety. His expertise and enthusiasm have invigorated our thinking and sharpened our strategic focus over the years."

She thanked Professor Larkin for sharing his deep knowledge about social and emotional wellbeing, his work reducing stigma and his commitment to Indigenous communities.

"Steve guided Beyond Blue's response to reconciliation and gave voice to the needs and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," Ms Gillard said. "As well, he offered wise counsel on key pieces of Beyond Blue research and we're grateful for his important contributions."

The board endorsed the appointments of three new members at the annual general meeting in Melbourne.

"These appointments demonstrate Beyond Blue's commitment to serving the community with depth and integrity," Ms Gillard said.

"With representation from Indigenous communities and rural and regional Australia, the diverse backgrounds of our new directors ensure Beyond Blue is embracing perspectives from all walks of Australian life," Ms Gillard said.

Incoming director **Derek Schoen** is a National Farmers' Federation director with a proud record of service to country Australia. A farmer for more than 36 years, Mr Schoen is a member and former president of the NSW Farmers Association and former deputy mayor of Corowa Shire Council. He remains a dedicated member of the Corowa Landcare group.

"When approached by Beyond Blue as to a possible board position, I felt there was a wealth of experience from rural life the board would value," Mr Schoen said. "During the drought, mental health has been a significant issue for rural Australia and country people have displayed considerable courage and resilience. That will be front of mind for me as I serve Beyond Blue."

Kamilaroi man **Russell Taylor** chairs The Burbangana Group and sits on the boards of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation and the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust. He is deputy chair of the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and a delegate to the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. He was NAIDOC Male Elder of the Year in 2018.

"I am delighted to have been appointed to the board and appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to the valuable and much-needed work of Beyond Blue," Mr Taylor said.

Denise McComish has been a Perth based partner with international business advisory firm KPMG for 30 years, providing audit and advisory services across a variety of industries in Australia and globally. She has served on the firm's national board and recently led its mining sector. She has extensive business and financial experience and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

"We have become much more aware of the impact that mental health issues have in the workplace, with increasing pressures on both men and women, including balancing career and family responsibilities," Ms McComish said. "I very much look forward to working with Beyond Blue as it continues its great contribution to improving health and wellbeing in all facets of our society."

Prof Steve Larkin joined the board in February 2009 as an expert in mental health and a key indigenous voice.

"It was such a privilege to be part of an organisation that continually strives to make a difference in people's lives where it matters," Prof Larkin said.

Former WA Mental Health Commissioner **Tim Marney** became a Beyond Blue director in August 2008, serving as Chair of the Audit, Finance and Risk committee and as Deputy Chair.

"I am immensely proud of what has been achieved by Beyond Blue over the past 11 years and incredibly grateful to have been a part of that," Mr Marney said.

Professor Michael Baigent, Professor Michael Kidd AM, Johanna Griggs, Dr Mukesh Haikerwal AC, Dr Jessica Dean, Paul Howes, the Hon Robert Knowles AO and Deputy Chair Kate Carnell AO remain on the board.

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).