

## Beyond Blue launches Be You – a major new mental health initiative for schools and early learning services

A major new Beyond Blue initiative designed to address mental health in schools and early learning services will be launched today.

At its heart, Be You is online training and resources, backed by 70 expert staff on the ground, to support busy principals, teachers and early learning professionals.

One in seven young people aged between four and 17 has experienced a mental health issue in the past 12 months – that is 560,000. Children spend around 30 hours at schools or in care each week, so educators are confronted with these issues every day.

Funded by the Australian Government, Be You makes it easier for educators to nurture the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- Giving them flexible training and clear information, based on solid research, that helps them recognise and respond confidently to emerging mental health issues in their early learning service or schools;
- Offering tips about how to build resilience in children and young people;
- Reviewing mental health-related programs and placing them in one, easy-to-use online directory;
- Giving advice to educators about how they can support their own wellbeing;
- Involving families and carers in their child's education and wellbeing; and
- Providing 70 consultants to guide schools and early learning services through the available resources.

Educators can claim completion of Be You learning modules towards their professional development.

Be You will bring together educators, parents, support staff and students themselves to develop and roll out action plans tailored to the needs of each school or early learning service.

Be You will help secondary schools know how to respond in the tragic event of a suicide, and where they can turn for support.

Developed by Beyond Blue in partnership with delivery partners Early Childhood Australia and headspace, Be You is available for free to all 24,000 early learning services, primary and secondary schools in Australia.

Be You brings together and builds on five evidence-based but disconnected programs – KidsMatter Early Learning, KidsMatter Primary, MindMatters, ResponseAbility and headspace School Support. But for the first time Australia will have a single, integrated initiative that encompasses a child's entire education, including the important transition points. This approach was recommended by the National Mental Health Commission's landmark 2014 review, *Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities*. The Commission reinforced the importance of the early years, and the importance of education settings in prevention and early intervention.

**Beyond Blue Chair Julia Gillard** said mental health can profoundly influence the educational outcomes of children and young people.

"Half of all lifelong mental health issues emerge before the age of 14," Ms Gillard said.

"We can help change this with prevention and early intervention. And by supporting the amazing principals, teachers and early learning professionals who spend so much time with our children and young people.

"Providing educators with the tools to foster resilience, and social and emotional wellbeing, is an investment in everyone's future because mentally healthy kids learn better.

“On behalf of Beyond Blue and our partners Early Childhood Australia and headspace, I commend the Commonwealth Government for this crucial investment in our nation’s future.”

**Beyond Blue Director and Be You National Advisory Council Chair Johanna Griggs** said early learning services and schools were the perfect settings to foster good mental health.

“We all have that one teacher who had a lasting impact on us, who changed our lives for the better,” Ms Griggs said. “Be You is here to promote good mental health among educators, children and young people – whether they’re thriving or need more support.

“The Be You online platform will give educators bite-size professional learning modules they can complete at their own pace.

“Early learning services and schools can also draw on the support of the expert Be You team – already in place around the country – to help them implement and tailor Be You to suit their needs.”

**Early Childhood Australia CEO Sam Page** said: “More than a million children attend one of Australia’s 15,500 early education services every year, it is critical that we use this important time in a child’s development to build the foundations of lifelong mental health and wellbeing.

“Early childhood educators, teachers and leaders can work together with families and the community to support children to develop their sense of self, empathy and communication skills which can be important ‘protective factors’ in later years.”

**headspace CEO Jason Trethowan** said: “It is crucial that school communities have access to services, support and advice. The aim of Be You is to strengthen the mental health literacy, resilience, self-care and help-seeking of every member of Australian school communities and Australian early childhood settings.

“The vast collective experience of our three organisations places us in an excellent position to make a genuine, long-lasting impact for generations to come.”

Early learning services, schools and educators can sign up to Be You at [www.beyou.edu.au](http://www.beyou.edu.au)

## KEY STATISTICS

- One in seven children between the ages of 4 and 17 experience a mental health condition in the past year. That is equivalent to 560,000 young Australians.<sup>1</sup>
- Half of all mental health issues emerge before the age of 14. They have a lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of the individual and on the lives of those around them.<sup>2</sup>
- Anxiety and depression are among the top three mental health issues our young people are dealing with.<sup>1</sup>
- Early learning services and schools play a significant role in supporting children and young people with emotional and behavioural problems and these environments are often where symptoms of mental health issues are first identified.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government. The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Accessed at [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/9DA8CA21306FE6EDCA257E2700016945/\\$File/child2.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/9DA8CA21306FE6EDCA257E2700016945/$File/child2.pdf) [October 2018]

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australia’s Health 2016. Accessed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/9844cefb-7745-4dd8-9ee2-f4d1c3d6a727/19787-AH16.pdf.aspx> [October 2018]

*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](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support) for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).*