



Media Release

8 June, 2021

Beyond Blue welcomes new board director

Beyond Blue today announces that widely respected primary health leader **Abbe Anderson** will join its board as celebrated director **Dr Mukesh Haikerwal AC** prepares to step down.

Ms Anderson, the former CEO of the Brisbane North Primary Health Network, will join the board from this month ahead of Dr Mukesh Haikerwal's retirement from his position in September.

Beyond Blue Chair the Hon Julia Gillard AC said over the past six years Dr Haikerwal had played a significant role in Beyond Blue's effort to advance the nation's understanding of and response to anxiety, depression and suicide.

"Mukesh's deep experience in family practice and his vast knowledge of Australia's healthcare landscape have informed much of Beyond Blue's system reform advocacy and service delivery agenda," Ms Gillard said.

"He is a passionate advocate for people who live with mental health issues, in particular doctors and health care workers. He was instrumental to Beyond Blue's efforts in this area Chairing the Advisory Committee for Beyond Blue's National Doctors' Mental Health Program and steering our work since. His real-world insights and advocacy have been inspirational and invaluable."

Dr Haikerwal said: "Over the last six years it's been my pleasure to have worked with the team at Beyond Blue. I remain passionate about supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians, and I look forward to seeing the organisation continue to make a positive and lasting impact in people's lives."

The board endorsed Ms Anderson's appointment at its March meeting.

A Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia, Ms Anderson has over thirty years' experience in the public, private and not-for-profit health sectors of Australia, New Zealand and the USA. She holds a PhD in Public Health and Community Medicine from the University of NSW. Known for her innovation, during her fourteen years as the CEO of the Brisbane North Primary Health Network, Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local and Brisbane North Division of General Practice, Ms Anderson served on numerous governance bodies including as a member of the Minister for Health's Primary Health Network (PHN) Advisory Panel on Mental Health and as Chair of the National PHN Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs working group.

"Abbe's appointment enhances the breadth and depth of experience on the Beyond Blue Board, and her detailed knowledge of primary care and integration of complex systems will help ensure that our strategies have meaningful impact on the ground, in our communities and health care settings," Ms Gillard said.

"Her appointment demonstrates Beyond Blue's commitment to working closely and collaboratively with PHNs around Australia to ensure people receive the support they need in the right place at the right time."

Ms Anderson said: "I am excited to work with the Beyond Blue board, and I hope to share my experience in primary health care to inform positive, person-centred outcomes. Our mental health care system is at a point of significant structural reform, and I share Beyond Blue's commitment to be led by the voice of the community to ensure supports and services are delivered to people when, where and how they need them."

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Ms Anderson joins Johanna Griggs AM, Dr Jessica Dean, Paul Howes, the Hon Robert Knowles AO, Dr Jason Lee, Denise McComish, Prof Helen Milroy, Deputy Chair Kate Carnell AO, Russel Taylor AM and Derek Schoen on the board.

The Beyond Blue Support Service is available via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).

The new Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Service is available 24/7 at coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au. Its dedicated phone line, staffed by mental health professionals briefed on the pandemic response, is now open on 1800 512 348.

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