

Wednesday, 7 July, 2021

Beyond Blue pays tribute to founding Board Director and former Deputy Chair John McGrath AM

Beyond Blue extends its deepest sympathies to the family, friends and colleagues of **founding Beyond Blue Board Director and former Deputy Chair John McGrath AM**, who passed away on July 4 aged 81.

John helped establish Beyond Blue and served on the Board from 2000 to 2010, after representing the electorate of Warrnambool as a National Party member from 1985 to 1999.

As a father of five, John and his family were profoundly touched by mental illness and suicide. He experienced both tragedy and hope while supporting two sons impacted by mental illness.

John retired from politics in 1999 to direct his energy towards better services and outcomes for people experiencing mental health issues – and their families.

Beyond Blue Chair The Hon Julia Gillard AC said John laid solid foundations for the fledgling Beyond Blue.

“He helped shape our identity as a bipartisan organisation in the early days and his significant public contribution to mental health and suicide prevention, and his passion to improve services and advocate for families and carers, was outstanding,” Ms Gillard said.

“Vale, and thank you, John. My thoughts and sympathies go out to his loved ones and everyone who is saddened by this news.”

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said John’s contribution to Beyond Blue inspired the team to this day.

“John was a gentle and warm man, an important part of Beyond Blue’s beginnings and history, and a mighty advocate for mental health and suicide prevention,” Ms Harman said.

“And he was always open to talking about his family’s experiences with mental illness and suicide. He could see the impact of open conversation on stigma and discrimination from very early on and that remains a core focus of our work today.

“On behalf of everyone at Beyond Blue, I extend our sincerest condolences to John’s family, friends and colleagues at this difficult time.”

John received widespread recognition for his significant contribution to the mental health sector, including being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2008 Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

As well as his work at Beyond Blue, John was the first Chair of Mental Health Australia and the Mental Health Professionals Network, patron and former chair of the Victorian Mental Health Carers Network (now known as Tandem), and Director of headspace and On The Line.

He was also involved with the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Carers Victoria, Carers Australia, National Advisory Council for Suicide Prevention and Australian Rotary Health Foundation.

ENDS

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Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service - 1800 512 348 or coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

Contact: media@beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue
GPO Box 1883 Melbourne VIC 3001
Beyond Blue Support Service 1300 22 4636
www.beyondblue.org.au