Beyond Blue encourages people impacted by devastating NSW floods to seek support

Beyond Blue is encouraging people to monitor their mental health as devastating floods hit Central West New South Wales.

While many communities are anticipating a peak in flood waters, others are waiting for waters to recede so they can assess the widespread damage and begin the clean-up.

**Beyond Blue Clinical Lead Dr Grant Blashki** said people can experience a wide range of normal reactions to disasters, such as floods.

“People have been facing continuous uncertainty in many areas of NSW, responding to red alerts with ongoing flood warnings, preparing for the worst and enduring a waiting game. In other areas, communities are dealing with the damage left behind, so it’s only natural to be feeling anxious in these situations,” Dr Blashki said.

“It’s useful to be aware the immediate acute mental health reactions to disaster events in the first few days or weeks, and equally important to look out for longer term mental health issues in the weeks and months after the immediate danger has subsided.

“In the short-term, people of course have a mix of feelings such as anger, worry and uncertainty, or feeling out of control. For most people, these feelings don’t last long, and people recover well with their own coping skills and support from family, friends and community networks.

“However, if these feelings persist, consider reaching out for mental health support, because getting help early can enhance your recovery.

“A small proportion of people go on to develop anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress conditions, or turn to alcohol or drugs to cope, so it’s important to seek support through your regular health provider, such as a GP or mental health professional, when these signs first arise.”

Dr Blashki said it’s important for people to look out for signs in the weeks and months after a flood event that suggest they may benefit from extra mental health support, including:

- feeling overwhelmed, numb or detached
- unable to focus or plan ahead
- constantly tearful
- intrusive memories or bad dreams
- Replaying the event over and over and questioning what could have been done differently

Dr Blashki also recommended visiting the Phoenix Australia web site for further information about managing disaster related mental health.

**Beyond Blue Support Service:** 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Contact Sarah Farnsworth on 0428 645 457 sarah.farnsworth@beyondblue.org.au or media@beyondblue.org.au for interview opportunities