



Media Release

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Beyond Blue supports regional mental health and First Nations youth research projects

Beyond Blue and the National Health and Medical Research Council are collaborating on research initiatives – one aimed at improving access to mental health support in regional areas and another to improve sleep for First Nations adolescents.

Beyond Blue is working with Queensland University of Technology (QUT) on the Navicare Project, and with the University of Queensland and James Cook Institute on the Sleep for Strong Souls initiative, contributing \$150,000 and \$185,000 towards each respective project.

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said the research would directly involve local communities who would play a crucial role in co-designing the projects.

“These two initiatives will help Beyond Blue and the broader mental health sector better understand what really matters to people and what’s needed to fill service gaps, based on direct input from communities, including people who live with poor mental health,” Ms Harman said.

“Beyond Blue looks forward to playing its part in bringing these projects to life, and we thank the National Health and Medical Research Council for partnering with us to support this important work.”

The three-year Navicare Project will focus on three Bowen Basin communities in Queensland.

The project seeks to simplify navigation of the mental health system and develop the capacity of existing mental health services by streamlining referral and intake processes, as well as increasing care options via telehealth.

“We know people in rural and remote parts of Australia are not getting the mental health support they need, partly because services that match their needs are hard to find, hard to access or simply don’t exist. This is has got to change, especially since suicide rates are especially high in regional areas,” Ms Harman said.

“The Navicare Project aims to address these inequities, improve service uptake in the Bowen Basin, and provide a model of service that can be scaled up to make the region’s mental health system easier to navigate.”

Beyond Blue will support the QUT team, Wesley Research Institute, Isaac Regional Council, Greater Whitsundays Communities, mental healthcare providers and Bowen Basin communities on the three-year initiative.

Beyond Blue will also collaborate on the five-year Sleep for Strong Souls project which will deliver programs to improve the sleep health of First Nations adolescents.

A sleep health program will be co-designed with people in six northern Queensland communities, and local First Nations peoples will be trained as “sleep coaches” to embed culturally appropriate sleep health care.

“Despite the well-established links between sleep and mental health, sleep health is often missing from mainstream mental health interventions for First Nations young people. This research will co-design culturally appropriate ways to embed sleep health into support services with community Elders, parents, carers, First Nations youth and service providers,” Ms Harman said.

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“The project will also upskill Indigenous youth workers who will be crucial in delivering timely and culturally appropriate support to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations young people.”

For more information, visit the NHMRC website.

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