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Subject: Morwell Mine Fire Submission
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Attachments: [beyondblue-submission-Hazelwood-Mine-Fire-Inquiry.pdf](#)

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Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Health

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Patron: His Excellency General the Honourable
Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)

10 August 2015

Professor John Catford
Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry
PO Box 24
Flinders Lane VIC 8009

Dear Professor Catford

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John'.

Thank you for the invitation to participate in the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry.

As you are aware, *beyondblue* is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to achieve a vision that all people in Australia achieve their best possible mental health. Our key goals are:

- To reduce the impact of depression, anxiety and suicide by supporting people to protect their mental health and to recover when they are unwell
- To reduce people's experiences of stigma and discrimination
- To improve people's opportunities to get effective support and services at the right time

beyondblue works with individuals, families, groups and communities to prevent depression, anxiety and suicide. We work with people across the lifespan and across all population groups. As a national population mental health organisation, we manage initiatives that local services find difficult to address at scale, including school and workplace-based promotion, prevention and early intervention programs, and an integrated suite of initiatives to raise awareness, increase knowledge, decrease stigma and discrimination, and encourage people to seek help early.

We also provide direct assistance to people and families affected by depression or anxiety, or at-risk of suicide, through self-help, peer-to-peer, and brief and low-intensity interventions that complement the services and supports offered by states and private providers. The vast majority of *beyondblue*'s programs and services are available to all Australians, including people living in the Latrobe Valley in Victoria.

***beyondblue* initiatives and the Latrobe Valley**

One way *beyondblue* has increased awareness and understanding of depression, anxiety and suicide, is through the *beyondblue* National Roadshow, which travelled over 50,000 kilometres in a big blue bus across every state and territory in Australia between February 2014 – May 2015, visiting hundreds of communities and encouraging all Australians to 'Take 1 step' for better mental health.

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The Roadshow visited the Gippsland region in February 2015. *beyondblue* hosted 12 community events in partnership with local organisations (see [Attachment A](#)). Key events held as part of this visit included:

- **Workplace mental health breakfast in Traralgon** – approximately 70 people attended this event, which included representatives from the local city council, health and social services, recruitment agencies and employers. Local businesses were encouraged to ‘Take 1 step’ to improve mental health within their workplace through *beyondblue*’s Heads Up initiative – a program which supports employers to create mentally healthy workplaces. The breakfast included speakers from *beyondblue* and the La Trobe City Council.
- **Community chat ‘n check in Traralgon** – approximately 85 people attended this community event, which included free information about depression and anxiety, and the opportunity to chat to the *beyondblue* team and local health service providers.
- **Community BBQ and bowls in Morwell** – approximately 20 people attended this free social evening at the Morwell Bowling Club, which also included an opportunity to find out more about depression and anxiety and staying well.

Through the National Roadshow people living close the Hazelwood Mine were provided with an opportunity to learn more about depression and anxiety, and find out how to access local health services and *beyondblue*’s resources.

beyondblue continues to support this community through:

- **The *beyondblue* Support Service** (1300 22 4636 - www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport) – this Service provides immediate, short-term, solutions-focused support and referral services via a 24/7 telephone service, web chat service from 3pm to midnight, and an email response service.
- **National advertising campaigns** – a current campaign is ‘Davo’s Man Therapy’ which targets blue-collar males in regional areas of Australia. At www.mantherapy.org.au men can assess their wellbeing, get answers to frequently asked questions about mental health and receive action-oriented advice on dealing with depression and anxiety.
- **Information and resources** – *beyondblue* has a comprehensive suite of free information and resources, including information to support **people who have experienced a disaster**, and videos and written information to support people to **have a conversation** with someone they are concerned about.
- **Online programs** –
 - *beyondblue*’s **websites** enable people to learn more about depression, anxiety and suicide; assess their mental health through completing a K-10 anxiety and depression checklist; and access appropriate services if they are at-risk of anxiety or depression.
 - the *beyondblue* website includes a **‘Directory of medical and allied health practitioners in mental health’**, to link people to service providers in their local region.
 - *beyondblue*’s **BRAVE program** is an interactive online program for the prevention and treatment of anxiety. The program provides ways for young people to better cope with their worries. There are also programs for parents.
 - *beyondblue*’s **online forums** provide an opportunity to receive peer support. There are over 30,000 members of *beyondblue*’s forums and an average of 40,000 visitors per month. Research on the impact of the forums has demonstrated that the forums help people to feel less depressed or anxious, encourage people to contact a health professional, and support people to make positive lifestyle changes.
- ***beyondblue* speakers bureau** – *beyondblue* has a pool of speakers who have a personal experience of depression and/or anxiety. The speakers share their stories of recovery and encourage others to take action and get the support they need, at public events, community forums and to the media.
- **school-based programs** – *beyondblue*’s KidsMatter (www.kidsmatter.edu.au) and MindMatters (www.mindmatters.edu.au) programs adopt ‘whole of school’ approaches to support student

mental health and wellbeing, and strengthen school capacity to support students experiencing mental health difficulties. These programs are currently being delivered in Traralgon and Morwell – for details, see [Attachment B](#).

- **Workplace-based programs** - Heads Up (www.headsup.org.au) is an Australian-first initiative of *beyondblue* and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance, which supports Australian businesses and workers to create more mentally healthy workplaces.

All of these initiatives are delivered with funding support from the Australian and State and Territory governments, including the Victorian Government, and with donations from individuals, community groups and private organisations. These initiatives will support people living in close proximity to the Hazelwood mine to protect their mental health and seek help early if they experience difficulties.

Strategies for people affected by the Hazelwood Mine Fire

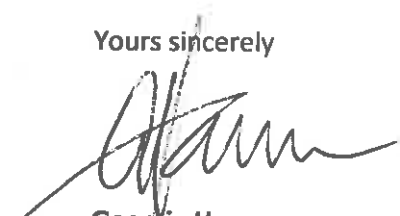
Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety are common. The exact causes of these conditions are not known, however there are many things that are associated with their development. Generally, depression and anxiety do not result from a single cause or event, but arise from a complex interplay of biological, psychological and social factors. This may include adverse life events, and psychosocial stressors such as dealing with the effects of natural disasters.

The 2014 Hazelwood Mine Fire Report identified a number of health consequences from the fire. In addition to physical effects on residents, the Board also observed a psychological impact on the community as a consequence of the mine fire. Many community members have developed levels of anxiety and depression, which they attribute to the mine fire.

A range of services and supports are available to assist people who experience these conditions, including those provided by *beyondblue*. As a national organisation, *beyondblue* does not have the capacity to provide unique local supports and services specifically to the Latrobe Valley, or to participate in local or regional health systems strengthening initiatives such as the proposed Health Conversation Zone. Rather, we would be keen to partner with local agencies to ensure that people living in the Latrobe Valley are aware of the wide range of resources available to them that are funded by governments, including the Victorian government, via *beyondblue* and others.

‘Stepped-care’ approaches to health, which integrate physical and mental health care and match services and supports to needs, is an effective way to protect the mental health of everyone in the community, and provide extra assistance to those people who are experiencing difficulties. Within this approach, which was recommended by the National Mental Health Commission in its review of mental health programmes and services, there would be easy to access information, self-help programmes, peer support or brief intervention from a trained professional, right through to comprehensive care provided by GPs, mental health specialists and non-government organisations that enable people to stay connected to family and friends, to get a good education and meaningful work. *beyondblue*’s services and programs could be delivered as a component of this stepped-care model. While this approach is being considered, we will continue to provide our free 24/7 Support Service for people living in the Latrobe Valley, to help people to find out more about depression and anxiety and how to access local support services.

Yours sincerely



Georgie Harman
CEO

Attachment A - *beyondblue* National Roadshow – Gippsland region

<p>ORBOST Wednesday 25 February 10am-3pm Orbost Men's Shed 24 Tyndall St, Orbost</p>	<p>Orbost free community BBQ and Men's Shed Shindig The big blue bus and National Roadshow team visited Orbost Men's Shed for a free community barbecue. Everyone was encouraged to drop by and pick up free information about depression and anxiety, hear from <i>beyondblue</i> Ambassador Paul Walshe, chat to the <i>beyondblue</i> team and local health service providers, make a mental health pledge (a written commitment or goal to achieve good mental health) and enjoy a free BBQ.</p>
<p>BAIRNSDALE Thursday 26 February 9am-12pm Bairnsdale Saleyards, 11 Saleyards Rd, Bairnsdale</p>	<p>Bairnsdale free community morning tea The big blue bus set up at the Bairnsdale Saleyards. Everyone was invited to come along and enjoy a free morning tea, pick up free information about mental health, chat to <i>beyondblue</i> staff and local health professionals to find out about available local support and make a mental health pledge.</p>
<p>SALE Thursday 26 February 1.30pm-3.30pm Sale Pedestrian Mall, Cunninghame St, Sale</p>	<p>Sale community chat 'n check – Proudly supported by Medibank Community Fund The big blue bus and National Roadshow team visited Sale. Everyone was encouraged to drop by and pick up free information about depression and anxiety, chat to the <i>beyondblue</i> team and local health service providers to find out about available support, and make a mental health pledge.</p>
<p>TRARALGON Friday 27 February 7am-9am Century Inn, 5 Airfield Rd, Corner Princes Highway, Traralgon</p>	<p>Workplace mental health breakfast presentation Business owners and managers were invited to attend a free breakfast presentation to learn how to 'Take 1 Step' to improve the mental health in their workplaces. Speakers included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgie Harman, <i>beyondblue</i> CEO • Michael O'Hanlon, <i>beyondblue</i> Workplace Engagement Manager • MC Phil Stone, La Trobe City Council General Manager Planning and Economic Sustainability
<p>TRARALGON Friday 27 February 11am-2pm Stockland Traralgon, 166-188 Franklin St, Traralgon</p>	<p>Traralgon community chat 'n check – Proudly supported by Medibank Community Fund The big blue bus and National Roadshow team visited Traralgon. Everyone was encouraged to drop by and pick up free information about depression and anxiety, chat to the <i>beyondblue</i> team and local health service providers to find out about available support, and make a mental health pledge.</p>
<p>MORWELL Friday 27 February 5pm-8pm Morwell Bowling Club, 52 Hazelwood Rd, Morwell</p>	<p>Morwell free community BBQ and barefoot bowls The Morwell community was invited to attend a free social evening at the Morwell Bowling Club. There was free bowling, face painting and entertainment. The evening was also a great opportunity to pick up free information about mental health and staying well and chat to <i>beyondblue</i> staff and local service providers.</p>
<p>BOOLARRA Saturday 28 February 10am-4pm Railway Park, Boolarra</p>	<p>Boolarra Folk Festival The big blue bus attended the Boolarra Folk Festival. The free annual community event offered a variety of musical acts along with an art, craft and food market. The festival was also a great opportunity to pick up free information about mental health and staying well and chat to <i>beyondblue</i> staff and local service providers.</p>
<p>COWES Sunday 1 March 10am-2pm Phillip Island Penguin Swim Classic, Cowes jetty carpark</p>	<p>Phillip Island Penguin Swim Classic The National Roadshow team cheered on participants in the Phillip Island Penguin Swim Classic – an annual open water event with 800m and 2km swim challenges. The big blue bus was at the Cowes foreshore and the day was a great opportunity for people to pick up a free <i>beyondblue</i> information show bag and find out about available support.</p>
<p>INVERLOCH Monday 2 March 12pm-1pm (lunch) 1-4pm (workshop) RACV Resort, Inverloch</p>	<p><i>beyondblue's</i> Professional Education to Aged Care (PEAC) workshop Residential aged care workers were invited to attend a free <i>beyondblue</i> PEAC workshop. The three-hour workshop aimed to raise awareness about depression and anxiety in older people and heighten the skills of staff working in the aged care sector.</p>

<p>LEONGATHA Monday 2 March 9am-12pm Leongatha Safeway Pern Lane, Leongatha</p>	<p>Leongatha community chat 'n check – Proudly supported by Medibank Community Fund The big blue bus and National Roadshow team set up near Leongatha Safeway. Everyone was encouraged to drop by and pick up free information about depression and anxiety, chat to the <i>beyondblue</i> team and local health service providers to find out about available support, and make a mental health pledge.</p>
<p>WONTHAGGI Monday 2 March 1.30pm-4pm Wonthaggi Plaza, Biggs Drive, Wonthaggi</p>	<p>Wonthaggi community chat 'n check – Proudly supported by Medibank Community Fund The big blue bus and National Roadshow team set up at Bass Coast Plaza in Wonthaggi. Everyone was encouraged to drop by and pick up free information about depression and anxiety, chat to the <i>beyondblue</i> team and local health service providers to find out about available support, and make a mental health pledge.</p>
<p>NEERIM Tuesday 3 March 1pm-3.30pm Neerim District Secondary College, Neerim East Rd, Neerim South</p>	<p>Neerim District Secondary College The big blue bus, National Roadshow team and the headspace Central West Gippsland crew visited Neerim District Secondary College to chat with students about mental health and staying well. Free information about depression, anxiety and how to help a friend was provided and students were encouraged to make a mental health pledge.</p>

Attachment B - beyondblue KidsMatter and MindMatters Schools	
Program	School
KidsMatter	Latrobe Special Development School, Traralgon
KidsMatter	Morwell Park Primary School, Morwell
KidsMatter	Sacred Heart Primary School, Morwell
KidsMatter	St Michael's School, Traralgon
KidsMatter	St Paul's Anglican Grammar School, Traralgon
KidsMatter	St Vincent De Paul School, Morwell
MindMatters	Traralgon College (West Campus), Traralgon
MindMatters	Traralgon College (Junior Campus), Traralgon