From: Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

To: Hazelwood Info Shared Mailbox

Subject: Morwell Mine Fire Submission

Date: Monday, 10 August 2015 6:14:55 PM

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

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 <u>Attachment A</u>). 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 bluecollar males in regional areas of Australia. At <a href="www.mantherapy.org.au">www.mantherapy.org.au</a> men can assess their
  wellbeing, get answers to frequently asked questions about mental health and receive actionoriented 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
  - o 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.
  - o 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.
  - o 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.
  - o 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 <u>Attachment B</u>.

 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

CEC

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10am-4pm event offered a variety of musical acts along with an art, craft and food market.  Railway Park, Boolarra festival was also a great opportunity to pick up free information about mental hand staying well and chat to beyondblue staff and local service providers.  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		
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and staying well and chat to beyondblue staff and local service providers.  Phillip Island Penguin Swim Classic  Sunday 1 March  10am-2pm  A Swim Classic – an annual open water event with 800m and 2km swim challenged	•	event offered a variety of musical acts along with an art, trait and root market. The
COWES Sunday 1 March 10am-2pm 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 challenge	Railway Park, Boolarra	festival was also a great opportunity to pick up free information about mental near
Sunday 1 March The National Roadshow team cheered on participants in the Phillip Island Pengu 10am-2pm Swim Classic – an annual open water event with 800m and 2km swim challenge		
10am-2pm Swim Classic – an annual open water event with 800m and 2km swim challenge	COWES	Phillip Island Penguin Swim Classic
10am-2pm Swim Classic – an annual open water event with 800m and 2km swim challenge	Sunday 1 March	The National Roadshow team cheered on participants in the Phillip Island Penguin
	10am-2pm	Swim Classic – an annual open water event with 800m and 2km swim challenges. The
Phillip Island Penguin big blue bus was at the Cowes foreshore and the day was a great opportunity to	<del>-</del>	big blue bus was at the Cowes foreshore and the day was a great opportunity for
Swim Classic, Cowes people to pick up a free beyondblue information show bag and find out about	-	people to pick up a free beyondblue information show bag and find out about
ietty carpark available support.		available support.
INVERLOCH beyondblue's Professional Education to Aged Care (PEAC) workshop		beyondblue's Professional Education to Aged Care (PEAC) workshop
Monday 2 March Residential aged care workers were invited to attend a free beyondblue PEAC		Residential aged care workers were invited to attend a free beyondblue PEAC
12pm-1pm (lunch) workshop. The three-hour workshop aimed to raise awareness about depression		workshop. The three-hour workshop aimed to raise awareness about depression ar
1-4pm (workshop) anxiety in older people and heighten the skills of staff working in the aged care		anxiety in older people and heighten the skills of staff working in the aged care
RACV Resort, Inverloch sector.	, ,	

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

Program	School	
KidsMatter	Latrobe Special Development School, Traralgon	4
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	