



## **beyondblue IIMHL workshop: Communicating behaviour change**

### **Introduction**

*beyondblue's* vision is that all people in Australia achieve their best possible mental health. We create change to protect everyone's mental health and improve the lives of individuals, families and communities affected by depression, anxiety and suicide.

### **The IIMHL workshop**

The interactive workshop was focused on *beyondblue's* approach to behaviour change. This approach revolves around extensive research and consultation with people with personal experience of depression, anxiety and suicide and other stakeholders, to understand the nature of the issue we are trying to address so that we can develop initiatives that translate this evidence and knowledge into changes in practice, policy and individual behaviour.

### **What knowledge was shared in the match?**

Over the course of the course of the two day workshop the group participated in a number of interactive presentations led by members of our speakers and ambassadors program and *beyondblue* staff. The speakers and ambassadors program includes individuals affected by depression, anxiety and suicide.

Key topics covered in the workshop included: an introduction to *beyondblue*; theories of behaviour change; *beyondblue's* approach to program development; achieving behaviour change at an individual level; achieving behaviour change at an organisational level; and achieving behaviour change at a systems level. Participants had an opportunity to hear about and discuss these issues in relating to specific *beyondblue* case studies including: Man Therapy; Dadvice; the Invisible Discriminator campaign; Heads Up; The Way Back Support Service; and the New Access program.

Participants also worked through a 'hypothetical scenario' on how to increase the level of workforce participation among people affected by a mental health condition within the Australia labour market, drawing on the principles from the *beyondblue* presentations as well as participants own knowledge and expertise. Participants were also encouraged to present their own work relating to behaviour change. This included a presentation on the Honest, Open and Proud project, the Glove Box project, and the Headstrong project.

### **What innovations were discussed? How have they been validated?**

The workshop highlighted a number of prominent behaviour change theories that apply to the individual, group and systems level and how these are utilised in *beyondblue's* work. These theories include: the health belief model; the theory of planned behaviour; the theory of reasoned action; nudge theories; stages of change theory; diffusions of innovation theory; and political advocacy. The *beyondblue* presenters discussed how elements from each of these theories are incorporated in our work, but also emphasised *beyondblue's* intuitive approach to behaviour change, which combines these theoretical models with extensive experience about what works and what doesn't. The

importance of evidence based design (which includes the views of people with personal experience of depression, anxiety of suicide) and effective evaluation were also discussed.

### **Who are the key actors and change agents you are trying to influence?**

Participants at the workshop learned that *beyondblue* has an extensive range of audiences who we seek to reach, engage and influence. As a national population mental health organisation our primary audience is the Australian public and in particular individuals, families and communities affected by depression, anxiety and suicide. Given the breadth of our audience *beyondblue* uses a multi-channel approach to communication via our websites, traditional media, social media and settings based initiatives to reach Australians of all ages, backgrounds and geographic locations. Several of the workshop presentations highlighted our approach to mass communication and the importance of solid formative research, strong program/campaign design (including the importance of pre-testing), modern mechanisms to achieve extensive reach, and conducting robust evaluation. The importance of considering the time it takes to achieve change, the need for multiple inter-locking strategies rather than a single solution, the need for audience segmentation and tailored communication, and the need for sufficient resourcing were also discussed. The central importance of providing people with opportunities to listen to and share personal stories was emphasised.

*beyondblue's* other major audiences include: researchers working in mental health research; intermediaries in schools and workplace settings including principals and business leaders; service providers within the health and non-health sectors who support people affected by depression, anxiety or suicide, and these providers' peak bodies and associations; senior leaders in government departments, mental health commissions and statutory authorities; as well as politicians from across the political spectrum. Several of the workshop presentations highlighted our approach to working with business leaders and government bodies to influence organisational and health systems change. The importance of using solid evidence, identifying key champions, achieving buy-in from multiple stakeholders, partnerships and collaboration, and effective advocacy were discussed.

### **How do participants plan to use and share this knowledge further?**

While the participants acknowledged that some of the approaches used by *beyondblue* would be difficult to adopt within their own organisations because of their different role (e.g. clinical/psychosocial service delivery rather than population mental health) or resource constraints, they nevertheless acknowledged that several of the principles could be applied in their own circumstances. One issue that was a common concern among workshop participants was stigma. The approaches to tackle stigma and discrimination presented by *beyondblue* and several participants were clearly of relevance to entire group. In addition to the resources provided by *beyondblue*, some of the participants provided the group with hard copy and soft copy electronic resources which they had brought with them.

### **How has your match built leadership for the future?**

The workshop enabled participants to hear and learn from people with lived experience, *beyondblue's* staff, and each other. The group was very engaged, asked a lot of questions, and shared their own views and experiences across the two days. This enabled participants to share information and make connections that would assist them in their roles as leaders in their organisations.