

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## LAUNCH

- **beyondblue Rural Advertising Campaign to Tackle Depression in Men**
- **beyondblue information line – 1300 22 4636**

**“In Australia, approximately one male farmer dies from suicide every four days.<sup>1</sup> Depression is a high risk factor for suicide. Let’s get the message out to the country that it’s an illness, not a weakness and men shouldn’t be ashamed to ask for help.”** Jeff Kennett, Chairman of *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*

From July 1 2006, *beyondblue* advertisements aimed at raising awareness of depression among men will be seen on television, radio, in cinemas and newspapers, in rural areas across Australia.

The ads portray a middle-aged farmer, a twenty-something young man at a country footy ground and an Indigenous man on a rural property. All of the men talk about their experience of depression and the message is: **“Men do get depression. Find out more. Call the *beyondblue* info line 1300 22 4636”**

From July 1, people across Australia will be able to phone the new *beyondblue* information line for the cost of a local call. The service will provide information about depression, anxiety and related substance-use disorders, available treatments and where to get help.

*beyondblue* Chairman The Hon. Jeff Kennett said: “Although the *beyondblue* info line is for everyone, in the next few months, it will be heavily promoted in rural areas in an effort to get country men to get help if they think they may be depressed.”

“More than half the men who have depression don’t seek help. They’d go to the doctor if they had a physical problem like a broken arm and they should do the same if they have a mental health problem such as depression. The sooner men see a doctor and get the right treatment, the sooner they’re likely to recover or have their illness managed,” he said.

Depression in men is often not recognised by themselves, their families or their friends. If depression is not detected, it can’t be treated and then it has the potential to become severe and disabling.

Quite often, what men and women experience when they are depressed and how they cope is different. Men are more likely than women to recognise and describe the *physical* symptoms of depression, like feeling tired or losing weight. They may acknowledge feeling irritable or stressed, rather than saying they feel sad. It’s also very common for men to use alcohol and drugs to make themselves feel better, but if they’re depressed, this may make their symptoms worse.

*beyondblue* CEO Ms Leonie Young said: “We know that men tend to put off seeing a doctor about health problems as they often think they should be tough, self-reliant, manage pain and take charge of situations. This can make it hard for them to admit they have any sort of health problem - let alone a *mental* health problem like depression.”

“Research indicates that depression rates are the same in both rural and metropolitan communities, but suicide rates are much higher in rural areas. This may be because country people are less aware of the symptoms and signs of the illness, they may feel ashamed or they may not know where to get help,” she said.

*beyondblue*-funded research, undertaken by Professor Fiona Judd’s team at The Centre for Rural Mental Health in Bendigo, shows that farmers often have a poor understanding of mental health and are reluctant to access formal health care. Farmers identified a number of factors which contribute to their ‘stress’, including drought-induced financial difficulties, stock loss, pressure of decision making and the constant physical and mental demands of farming work.

“It’s important people know that stress on its own is not depression. To find out more, call the bb info line on 1300 22 4636,” Ms Young said.

**Contact: *beyondblue* Communications Manager, Julie Foster - (03) 9810 6100 or 0409 433 501**

<sup>1</sup>: (Page A, Fragar (2002) Suicide in Australian Farming Aust. NZ J Psychiatry)