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***beyondblue* leads major new mental health in education initiative**

beyondblue is set to lead a transformation in the development of good mental health and wellbeing practices for all Australian children from early learning centres to the end of secondary school.

After a competitive tender process the Minister for Health, The Hon. Greg Hunt MP, today announced a grant of \$52.7 million over two years to *beyondblue* for a new mental health in education program.

beyondblue will begin the first stage of developing and designing the ground-breaking initiative from July 1, 2017.

The initiative will be launched to early learning services, primary and secondary schools in partnership with Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, **headspace**, in 2018.

With research showing one in seven Australian children has had a mental health disorder in the past 12 months *beyondblue* Chairman The Hon. Jeff Kennett AC described the program as a game-changer that would replace the current fragmented approach with a wholly integrated one.

"Our vision is to create resilient early childhood and school communities where every child, adolescent, principal, teacher, worker, parent and guardian can achieve their best mental health," Mr Kennett said.

beyondblue CEO Georgie Harman added: "We will build on the best bits of existing Commonwealth programs, but give early childhood services and school communities a contemporary program that reflects the world in which they operate.

"It will deal with the gamut of issues, from educating staff about mental health and how to protect themselves, to supporting schools to implement their own strategies for mental health, wellbeing, suicide prevention and crisis support."

In leading this initiative *beyondblue*, welcomed the opportunity to work with delivery partners ECA and headspace.

"We will bring together the best minds from across the mental health and education sectors to build a contemporary national child and youth mental health program with the aim of helping everyone reach their full potential academically, emotionally, socially and in later life," Ms Harman said.

beyondblue has been involved in the education sector for almost a decade through its KidsMatter (early childhood and primary) and MindMatters (secondary) programs, which operate in half of all Australian schools and will continue until the new initiative is launched.

ECA chief executive Samantha Page said it was critical to involve early learning in the program as it provides a window of opportunity for early intervention and prevention.

"Early childhood is when social skills, emotional skills and cognitive skills are developing, laying the foundations for mental health and wellbeing," Ms Page said. "This, in turn, influences a child's ability to make successful life transitions, and to learn and progress at school."

Jason Trethowan, CEO of headspace said the new program would help improve student understanding of mental health and continue to support school communities impacted by youth suicide.

"Supporting schools to build the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is crucial to stem the rising tide of mental health difficulties facing young Australians," Mr Trethowan said.

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