

SD07/143

## Standing Committee on State Development Inquiry into aspects of agriculture in NSW

*beyondblue* Response to further questions

*Is there a difference in the uptake of rural versus urban programs?*

*beyondblue* does not have any programs in NSW where a meaningful comparison of rural and urban uptake can be made, that is, where a program is targeting both urban and rural populations. *beyondblue* programs generally have a specific target group, e.g. primary schools, older people, and comparison data on rural versus urban uptake is not collected unless it is a specific measure required for outcomes evaluation.

The NSW Council on the Ageing Peer Education program targets older people in rural and urban NSW, but it is too early to draw participation data from it.

*beyondblue* is supporting the 45 and Up study to include depression. This study is being oversampled in rural sectors to ensure a useful participation rate is gained over the period of the project.

*What monitoring and evaluation of your programs is conducted?*

All *beyondblue* programs, including commissioned research, include a rigorous evaluation component.

The major part of recent *beyondblue* work in rural NSW is the partnership with the NSW Government Drought Mental Health Action Plan which has a monitoring and evaluation process managed by the Centre for Rural and Remote Health (Orange). Any *beyondblue* program conducted in NSW will be evaluated on participation rates and outcomes achieved.

An independent evaluation of *beyondblue* (2000-2004) was conducted by Associate Professor Jane Pirkis, University of Melbourne. This evaluation report is available from the *beyondblue* website at [http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link\\_id=2.24&tmp=FileDownload&fid=374](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=2.24&tmp=FileDownload&fid=374)

A team from the Australian National University's Centre for Mental Health Research, led by Professor Anthony Jorm, evaluated the effects of *beyondblue*'s community awareness work. The research, published in the *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* in 2005, found that 19 per cent of survey respondents in high-exposure States were familiar with *beyondblue* compared to 9.4 per cent of those in low-exposure States. In the absence of a completely unexposed control group, the researchers compared awareness levels in States providing funding to *beyondblue* against those in States that did not; the assumption being that the residents of non-funding States would have relatively

less exposure to the organisation's messages. This assumption was supported by the finding that awareness of beyondblue was approximately twice as high in the States and Territories that funded the organisation. The high-exposure States were also found to have a greater increase in their belief that counselling and antidepressants were helpful interventions for depression, and that coping alone was not.