



Beyond Blue Strategy 2023+

Earlier. Easier. Together.

July 2023

 beyondblue.org.au

Note from the Chair

Australia is changing and so is Beyond Blue.

From economic shifts and rising inequality to natural disasters, our nation is grappling with forces that have profound impacts on our mental health and wellbeing.

Recognising the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, Beyond Blue is evolving how we support Australia's mental health.

Strategy 2023+ charts our course from July 2023 for the next 5 years.

We have drawn on community insights, the views of our partners and supporters, and identified gaps and opportunities that will allow us to play to our greatest strengths.

Our next strategy can be described in three simple words: Earlier. Easier. Together.

The current system is too often crisis-driven – and people often only get support when they're at breaking point.

Now, in a deliberate step we believe best serves the community, **we will sharpen our focus towards prevention and earlier intervention.**

Supporting people before mental health issues arise or they reach crisis.

Helping people to feel better earlier, get well and stay well.

We want to **make it as easy as possible for people to find the right advice and support when they come to Beyond Blue.** And to have a positive experience when they connect with us.

We will keep listening to the community to evolve our support options and influence our advocacy.

We can't and shouldn't do this alone. Sharpening our focus answers community calls for less confusion and more clarity about who does what in Australia's mental health sector.

So, **we will continue to grow our impact working together with others.**

Our strategic vision remains that all people in Australia achieve their best possible mental health.

And, as the national depression and anxiety initiative, we will maintain our longstanding focus on Australia's most prevalent mental health conditions.

As we realign, I want to be clear that we're here for all Australians, no matter what they're going through.

Beyond Blue will continue to be that big blue door to non-judgmental, immediate, and free support, advice, and referral – from those who want to look after their mental health, to those in high distress and crisis.

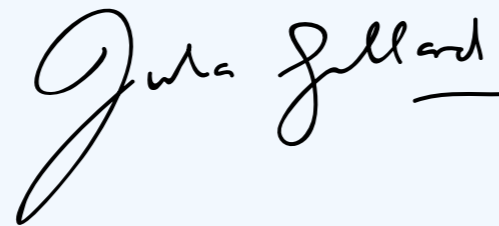
We will provide trusted digital tools, counselling and coaching by webchat, phone and in the community.

We will blend research with data and insights from the people who use our services and supports to drive improvements.

We will listen deeply as we continue to advocate for an accessible, just and person-centred mental health system, co-designed with the people who use it.

We will never take for granted the trust and support the community gifts us, governing with integrity and purpose.

We look forward to continuing to support all people in Australia to achieve their best possible mental health.



The Hon. Julia Gillard AC
Chair



Acknowledgment of Country

Beyond Blue acknowledges the Land on which our head office is based has deep connections to peoples and cultures across the Eastern Kulin Nation. As such we acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this area, the Wurundjeri Peoples, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. As an organisation with national reach, we extend our respect to all Elders and First Nations peoples across Australia.

Acknowledgment of Lived and Living Experience

Beyond Blue acknowledges those who are living with and managing mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, their families, friends and supporters, and those affected by suicide. Beyond Blue belongs to you, first and foremost. Your perspectives are essential to defining and achieving our goals and your experiences continue to inspire and drive us to do better.

Beyond Blue Strategy 2023+

Vision

All people in Australia achieve their best possible mental health.



Role

We work with the community to improve mental health and make it easier for people to feel better earlier, get well and stay well.



Our Goals

Understanding

More people understand how to look after their mental health.

I know and trust Beyond Blue for mental health information that meets my needs

Trustworthy advice, information and tools can equip people with the knowledge to **manage their mental health day to day and know when and how to reach out for support** and what Beyond Blue offers.

Supporting

More people access support earlier.

I access support before my mental health problems snowball

By reaching out earlier, people can start to use tools and support before approaching crisis point. This results in less distress and reduces the chances of problems spiralling.

Connecting

More people feel connected.

I am not alone, because I am connected to others

By sharing people's lived experiences and stories and building supportive environments **where looking after mental health is normal**, people can feel less alone and empowered to reach out to those around them.

Leading

People see us leading and influencing positive system and social change.

I know that Beyond Blue is working towards making changes for better mental health

There are historical, social, cultural and environmental factors that **influence people's ability to achieve their best possible mental health**. We advocate for positive social change and system reform. We play a key role in building a future mental health system that features easy to access, affordable, inclusive, early support options.

Integrity

People trust that we operate with integrity.

I have confidence in Beyond Blue to make an impact

The world is changing rapidly, with digital advancements, resource constraints, and shifting community needs and expectations. To keep pace with these changes we commit to governing and running our organisation with the utmost integrity and value to the community and our supporters. This includes ensuring we are transparent and **inclusive, our workforce is skilled and engaged and we act to earn people's trust**.

About Beyond Blue

For more than 20 years, people in Australia have placed their trust in Beyond Blue and come to us as a reliable source of mental health information, support and hope.

We focus on tackling depression and anxiety – the most common mental health conditions in Australia – and through this we also contribute to suicide prevention.

But we know labels often don't work for people or reflect their lives, strengths and challenges. So, we hope we offer something helpful for everyone with mental health issues – whether they have one or several diagnoses, whether they're just starting to struggle or already live with long-term and varied needs, or whether they're mentally well and want to stay that way.

We are Australia's most well known, trusted and visited mental health organisation.

We never take this for granted. With it comes a deep responsibility to listen, and understand people's needs and aspirations and ensure these are **at the heart of everything we do.**

Over the years we've changed how we work and what we do to respond to the community's evolving needs. We have a track record in identifying gaps in the mental health system, developing and scaling new service models and workforces, and working with partners to deepen our impact and broaden our reach.

In this 5-year strategy, our focus is making it easier for people to access high quality mental health support earlier.

“There's a very strong stigma in my community around just having an issue. A lot of weakness is perceived.” - Community member



Our organisational values drive the way we influence, interact with each other, and work together to achieve results. We consistently demonstrate the behaviours and actions that reflect Beyond Blue's values and underpin our vision that 'All people in Australia achieve their best possible mental health'.

Why we do what we do

Around

3.3 million people in Australia live with **anxiety**

Around

1.5 million people in Australia live with **depression**

On average,

9

People in Australia take their own lives every day **7 of whom are men**



1 in 3 women & 1 in 5 men are likely to experience **anxiety** in their lifetime



1 in 6 women & 1 in 8 men are likely to experience **depression** in their lifetime

- It's been a challenging few years and many people have found their mental health deteriorating.
- We know some of the social, economic and environmental conditions that can be risk factors for poor mental health and suicide are likely to worsen in the coming years.
- We must have a mental health and suicide prevention system and workforce fit for the challenges ahead.
- For many, stigma and discrimination are still real barriers, stopping people from talking about how they're thinking and feeling, and connecting to support options.
- Recognising the early signs and symptoms of mental ill health can also be a challenge.

- Some don't think their problem is serious enough to seek support, or they worry about taking up someone else's place in a stretched mental health system.
- All of this means too many people only get support when they get to a point of crisis.
- Families, carers and other supporters often struggle to find relevant information on how to support loved ones, friends or colleagues experiencing a mental health challenge. They can also find their own mental health declining.

How we work

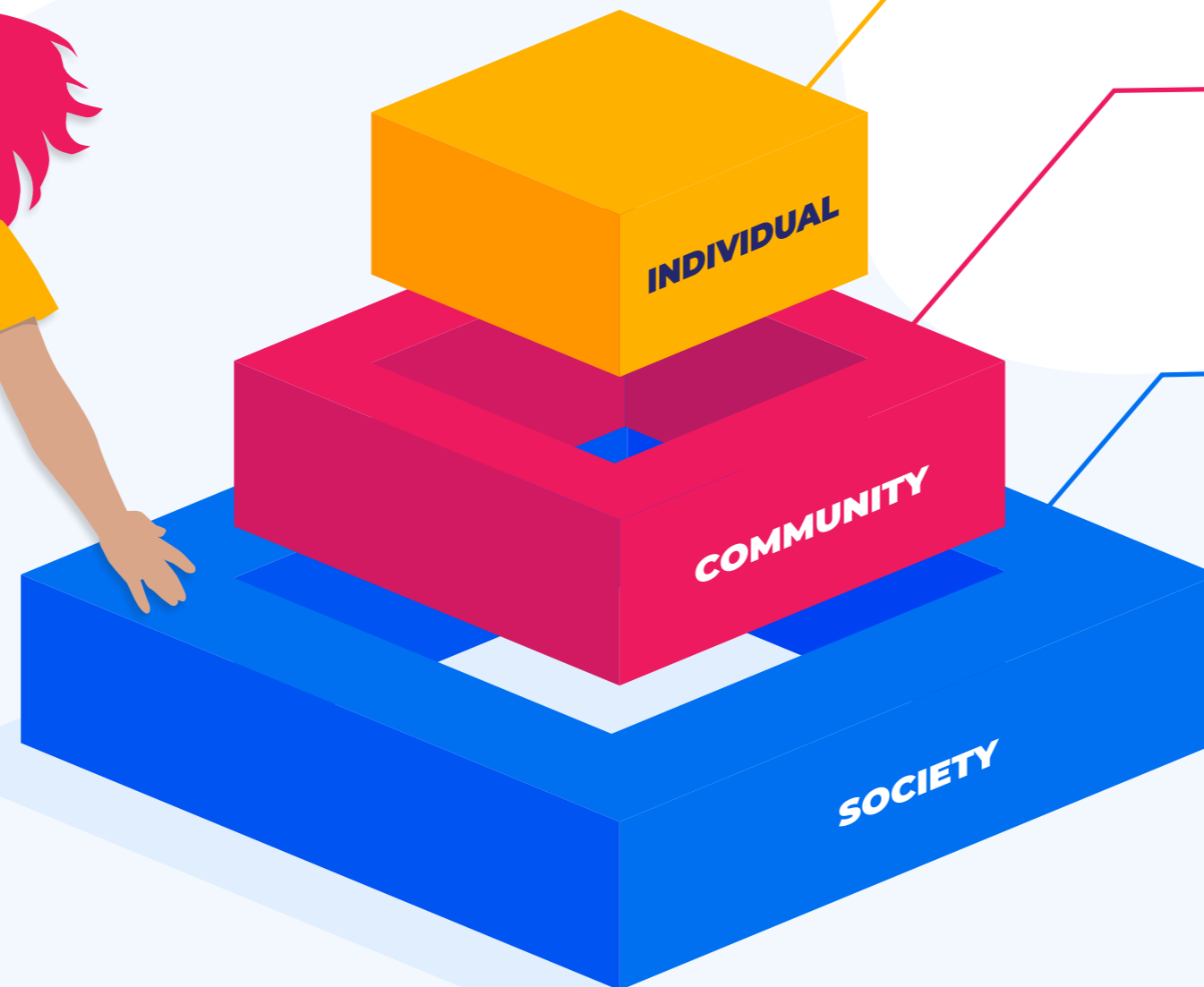
We know that everyone is different, and their mental health is affected or protected by many factors in their lives. It may be difficulties accessing affordable mental health support, no home or an unsafe home, no job or work that affects their wellbeing, racism or discrimination, loneliness or difficult relationships.


For that reason, we work at the individual, community and system levels to drive positive change and improve mental health. Our roles are summarised in the diagram below.


While we don't work directly to solve all these issues, we need to always be thinking about them in how we work and who we partner with.


We know this is not a simple task.


We believe if we are clear about who we are, where we focus, and how we work over the next 5 years then we will continue to make a difference.



 We provide trustworthy **information and services** to support people to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to look after their mental health.

 We work with the **community** to create supportive environments where looking after mental health is normal.

 We **advocate** for system reform and social change to shape better mental health.

 We **identify system gaps and incubate** new services and products to meet community need.

 We **contribute to society's understanding of mental health** through research and development.

The impact we are having

Building community connection and giving back

We strive to create connections through our **events and volunteering** that allow people to feel part of something bigger and offers an opportunity to give back and help others.

Providing trustworthy information, support and referrals to anyone in Australia

We know it is not always easy to reach out for help. Beyond Blue's **Website and Support Service** are often the first places people turn to for free advice, information, resources, support and referrals to get where they want to be.

Innovating low intensity offerings and building and scaling different workforces

Beyond Blue's **NewAccess** is a free, one-on-one coaching service to help people better manage everyday life stress, without needing a doctor's referral.

Incubating new services to address system gaps

Beyond Blue designed **The Way Back** Support service to fill a crucial missing piece in Australia's suicide prevention system. It provides people who have been discharged from hospital after a suicide attempt with personalised, practical, one-on-one support in the community.

Creating supportive learning environments

Be You supports early learning services and schools to develop positive, inclusive and resilient learning communities. We deliver this national initiative in partnership with Early Childhood Australia and Headspace.

Connecting people to their shared experiences

Our **Peer Support Online Forums** offer a safe, inclusive and anonymous space for sharing experiences, offering hope, and connecting with a supportive community who learn from each other.

Centering lived experience

Our **Blue Voices** community group shares their knowledge and expertise to drive improvements in mental health policy, programs and services.

Responding to major events to support community need

When events impacting the community strike, Beyond Blue provides support where and how it's most needed. In response to COVID-19, Beyond Blue rapidly launched the **Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service (CMWSS)**.

Advocating for system reform

We continue to **advocate**, alongside others, for mental health reform that puts lived experience at its core, is informed by the best available evidence, and measures meaningful outcomes.

"I started volunteering because I wanted to do something for others, but also for myself. I feel like I am giving back for all the support I have received over my time."
- Beyond Blue Volunteer

In 2021-22 **4.9m people** visited the Beyond Blue website. **89%** of people felt less distressed after contacting our Support Service.

7 out of 10 people recover after using NewAccess service.

As of December 2022, The Way Back supported **12,881 people** across 38 sites. Evaluation findings show that measures of suicidality decreased **63%** and psychological distress decreased **28%**.

Be You educators feel more confident they could respond appropriately to support a child or young person with a mental health condition (**79% v 67%**).

"The cloak of anonymity here [Beyond Blue Peer Support Forums] helps me to get over my fear of being burdensome to people."
- Beyond Blue Peer Support Forums User

"It's been so meaningful to share my experiences in a way that can help others and inform initiatives for change."
- Blue Voices Member

"Fantastic service, really got me through and stopped me from hurting myself."
- CMWSS User 2020

Our advocacy for universal aftercare achieved policy success with all governments in 2021 committing to roll out suicide aftercare across Australia. Beyond Blue is now working to support the Commonwealth to safely transition **The Way Back** services to States and Territories and Primary Health Networks.



Our next steps

Looking ahead, from mid-2023 we will continue to focus on working with the community to improve mental health by making it easier for people to access support earlier, to get well and stay well. This will also help prevent suicide.

- We keep listening to the community, so we have a deep understanding of what people want and need. This will help us to make it easier for people to access the right information and support at a time and in a way that best suits their lives.
- We are redoubling our efforts in early intervention to support people before issues escalate and require more intensive and expensive support.
- We will specialise in intervening early through accessible, trustworthy, non-clinical supports and services, and new workforce models.
- We will continue to play a role in innovating new solutions to address unmet community need within the sector.
- Through our advocacy, we are also focusing on prevention, identifying what can help prevent anxiety and depression from emerging in the first place.



Why we will focus on intervening early

Half a million Australians who are not accessing any care, and up to 2 million people being treated with medication and/or individual therapy, could benefit from low intensity support options.*



* Source: Productivity Commission 2020.

**OUR
GOALS**



Understanding

We know it's important to learn about mental health so people can recognise the warning signs in themselves and others before a significant challenge or crisis arises.

In a digital age, there's a world of information circulating on mental health and how to take care of it, which makes it difficult to know who and what to trust and where to turn when looking for advice and resources.

By understanding what matters most to people, we can provide better support and more inclusive, personalised experiences, where people can trust that the information is reliable, evidence-based and tailor-made for their life circumstances.

“You need the knowledge and skills to recognise and act on early symptoms.”

- Community member

I know and trust Beyond Blue for mental health information that meets my needs

Goal

More people understand how to look after their mental health.

We understand and reflect the needs of the community by providing trustworthy tools and information to help people proactively look after their mental health.

Initiatives

- We support people to understand what they, and those around them can do to look after their mental health and support others by providing relevant information and resources - both to stay well and to lower the 'help-seeking' bar
- We co-design services and supports with the community and use our data and insights to gain greater understanding of lived experiences, so we can continually improve, ensuring we are relevant and inclusive
- We focus on developing useful content, using language that resonates with diverse audiences
- We use social media, campaigns and media to promote self-management
- Through Be You, we build workforce capacity and confidence in schools and early childhood services

Outcomes

- People have increased knowledge of the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- People learn how to proactively manage their mental health
- People have greater knowledge of when and how to access support
- People understand how we can support them



Knowing where to turn for trustworthy tools and information is key. **Be You** delivered in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace, focuses on early learning services and working with schools to develop positive, inclusive and resilient communities. Educators involved in Be You reported that they felt more empowered to contribute to their learning community's wellbeing compared to non-users of the service (60% versus 49%).

Supporting

When faced with a mental health challenge, people can face complex barriers before support is accessed. As a result, we know that many self-exclude from help-seeking, delaying reaching out until they are struggling or in crisis and have less capacity to act.

When people do reach out for help, it can be daunting to begin with. People experience a fragmented system, where there are gaps and duplication of services. It can be especially overwhelming to know when or how to seek the type of support they trust and feel comfortable with.

“... [They provide] connection, assurance and referrals based on where you’re up to. This is very reassuring.”

- Community member

I access support before my mental health problems snowball

Goal

More people access support earlier.

We offer early mental health support for individuals and their supporters, which is easy to access, personalised, safe and connected, and we continue to innovate to ensure people have the right support at the right time.

Initiatives

- We make it easy for people to access support early, either through our services and programs or via referral to another provider
- We identify and create solutions to address unmet community need within the sector – with a focus on interventions that support people earlier
- We continue to deliver our Support Service, peer-to-peer forums, and work to scale up brief interventions and low intensity support options, like New Access. We innovate through new models of support, and via our Be You program, provide active support to educators

Outcomes

- People who engage with us have their needs met
- People who engage with our Support Services experience less distress
- Innovative approaches to meet community needs and address sector gaps are generated

We are a ‘Big Blue Door’ to information, support and connection and make it easier for people to access what they need, when they need it. Accessing mental health information and support can be complex and overwhelming. We believe that no matter what point someone contacts Beyond Blue, they and their family, friends and other supporters should have a positive experience that improves their mental health. To achieve this, we will continue to work towards realising our Big Blue Door vision – to provide accessible, personalised, safe, and connected mental health support for all people who engage with Beyond Blue. Over time we want every part of Beyond Blue to be interconnected so regardless of how someone reaches us – whether it’s through our 24/7 web chat counselling, phone-based support or peer to peer forums – they will be made aware of and given the option to connect to our other relevant programs.



Connecting

Working through a mental health challenge can be isolating and many people still face social and self-stigma, which makes it difficult to reach out to those around them.

We all have a role to play in creating safe environments that provide reassurance and comfort for people that what they are going through is 'okay' and there is hope.

Compassion, empathy and connection can also empower people to take steps to learn how to manage their struggles.

“[A key moment in my journey was] forming two-way support systems with friends and relatives and being accessible as a support person for my family members and friends.”

- Community member



I am not alone, because I am connected to others

Goal

More people feel connected.

We use the power of community and a supportive network of partner organisations to create inclusive and supportive environments where people feel they belong.

Initiatives

- We encourage people to have open and helpful conversations and connect with others who might either be experiencing mental health challenges or supporting someone who is
- We offer the opportunity for people to share their stories and use their experiences to help others
- We focus on sharing stories and creating connections through initiatives such as our Speakers Bureau, Blue Voices, events and volunteering, community and corporate partnerships, fundraising and philanthropy, and Be You

Outcomes

- Our speakers, Blue Voices members and volunteers feel confident and empowered to advocate for positive mental health outcomes in their communities
- Supportive environments are created where looking after mental health is normalised

Talking about mental health still carries stigma and negative connotations for some. Fear of discrimination can prevent people from reaching out to those around them in times of need, further isolating people. In 2022, Beyond Blue launched its first-ever signature fundraising event, the **Big Blue Table**, which aims to combat stigma surrounding mental health – one shared meal at a time. We know that a conversation can make all the difference for people to feel better connected and supported to look after their mental health. The Big Blue Table encourages the community to gather, share a meal, and to place mental health at the centrepiece of every table.

Leading

Historical, social, cultural and environmental factors can influence peoples' ability to achieve their best possible mental health.

Too often, when people try to access the mental health system their experience is confusing and disjointed and they need to tell their story many times. It can be overwhelming to discover the system is complex to navigate, with duplication and gaps.

We are continually learning, and our work will be guided by what influences mental health at all ages and how we can best contribute to change.

“It is important to use power to provide positive social and political change to improve mental health...”

- Community member

I know that Beyond Blue is working towards making changes for better mental health

Goal

People see us leading and influencing positive system and social change.

We are leaders in tackling depression and anxiety in Australia, work collaboratively with partners, amplify community lived experience, research and data insights, demonstrate leadership for better mental health, and continually learn, adapt and evolve

Initiatives

- We strategically partner and provide national leadership to reduce complexity and duplication in the mental health system, making it work for the people who use it and their supporters
 - We continue to lead on behaviour change and reducing stigma and discrimination
 - We advocate for the ongoing development of a person-centred mental health system, and for action on the social determinants of mental health at all ages to prevent mental health conditions and intervene early
 - We're focused on translating research knowledge and insights, and building our data capabilities to amplify community insights, not only to inform our own policy and advocacy positions, but to share and support change across the system
- We will continue to build partnerships and alliances to strengthen early intervention and prevention approaches
 - We will continue to champion and amplify the work of others
 - We will advocate for prevention, early intervention and system reform

Outcomes

- We create positive change in the mental health sector by advocating for better mental health for everyone in Australia

Beyond Blue recognised the gap for people to access free low-intensity support that could provide early support to people and to relieve pressure on more intensive support services. So, as a solution, Beyond Blue developed and scaled a new workforce model, **NewAccess**. NewAccess is a free, one-on-one coaching service to help people address the early signs of depression and anxiety and better manage life's stresses. The program has high engagement and feedback scores and it's effective, with 7 in 10 people recovering after using the service. Expanding and integrating NewAccess would be a genuine step towards mental health system reform.



Integrity

The world in which we live and work is becoming increasingly complex.

We're committed to evolving and adapting to set Beyond Blue up to weather any storm, so we can always be there for those who turn to us and continue achieving the best possible outcomes for the community.

We need to respond to emerging digital opportunities and challenges, to continually develop our business practices, and to identify and deliver efficient, high-quality products and services in a workplace that enables our people to be productive and flourish.

We are focused on remaining accountable and worthy of the trust that is placed in us.

'... [Y]ou trust them, love their advice and always rely on them no matter what. You always want them around ...'

- Community member

I have confidence in Beyond Blue to make an impact

Goal

People trust that we operate with integrity.

We are a well-governed and sustainable organisation making a noticeable positive impact – we have the people, processes, systems, culture and data in place to deliver

Initiatives

- We continue to build capacity and capability to respond to changing community needs
- We champion safe and inclusive practices
- We ensure good governance is maintained and championed across the organisation
- We have diverse and sustainable income sources to meet rising demand and costs
- We ensure accountability and measurement of impact through data insights and independent evaluations
- We build efficient processes
- We invest in fit for purpose, scalable and secure technology
- *We will be a leader in workplace mental health and support people to flourish through a focus on culture, capability and job clarity*
- *We will ensure that our processes support people to deliver the best value for the community*
- *We will evolve our systems and data capabilities to meet the emerging needs of the community and our organisation*

Outcomes

- The community trusts us
- Our workforce is engaged and excited to contribute to our Vision
- We are a safe and inclusive organisation
- We demonstrate impact and are considered a good investment

An engaged workforce leads to high performance and strong retention of talent – **as without our people, we don't succeed.** At Beyond Blue we are committed to ensuring a psychologically safe workplace that prioritises inclusivity, diversity and wellbeing. Figures from our employee engagement survey highlighted that 83% of our people feel they can be their authentic self at work.



