

media release



Strictly embargoed until 11am, Monday 23 November 2009

Partnership to xTEND rural depression research

A major new research partnership to be announced at an event today in Newcastle will examine ways to minimise the risk factors for male suicide in rural communities.

beyondblue: the national depression initiative and Xstrata Coal are contributing funding to the three year project, known as xTEND: eXtending Treatments, Education and Networks for Depression.

Xstrata Coal has committed \$300,000 to the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) to fund a Post Doctoral Research Fellowship for Dr Kerry Inder from the University of Newcastle, who will work with co-investigators from the University and Hunter New England Health. *beyondblue* has provided \$325,000 in funding to support the project.

“We are very concerned about the impact of social isolation and family breakdown on depression and suicide rates in country Australia,” *beyondblue* Chief Executive Officer, Leonie Young, said.

“This partnership and research into addressing the risk factors for depression is a significant commitment to improving the health and quality of life for all men and their families.”

Professor Brian Kelly, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Newcastle, said the research project would focus on the role of social networks, relationship breakdown and depression as potential risk factors for suicide and develop mitigation strategies.

“One particular area of interest is the mental health of men working in a range of industries in rural areas including mining, farming and business,” Professor Kelly said. “These men often work in environments where sharing problems and getting help are not always easy.”

Newcastle-based ABC broadcaster and *beyondblue* Ambassador Craig Hamilton, who has experienced depression and worked in the mines, will represent *beyondblue* as Master of Ceremonies for the announcement.

“I am acutely aware that the issue of depression in rural communities and in isolated parts of Australia is still an ongoing challenge. The more information and communication in this area, the better off individuals and communities will be,” Mr Hamilton said.

“In my experience, the nature of mine work today – with longer shifts and rotating rosters – presents its own challenges to health and well-being. The introduction of solid research and the development of an effective early intervention scheme for men’s mental health in rural communities is an extremely positive step forward.”

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In partnership with our community



HUNTER NEW ENGLAND
NSW HEALTH



beyondblue
the national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au



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Xstrata Coal NSW Chief Operating Officer Ian Cribb said, "Xstrata Coal was proud to support the HMRI and its important research to help reduce the rate of suicide in rural communities."

Chief Executive Officer of *beyondblue*, Leonie Young, will announce the partnership at a media launch at 11am today at Fort Scratchley in Newcastle.

Professor Kelly and Dr Inder are members of the University of Newcastle's Priority Research Centre for Brain and Mental Health Research and work in collaboration with HMRI's Brain and Mental Health Research Program.

HMRI is a partnership between Hunter New England Health, the University of Newcastle and the community.

Media opportunity – Launch of the *beyondblue* HMRI Xstrata Research Partnership - xTEND

When: Monday 23 November 2009

Time: 10.30am media interviews
11am - media launch

Who: Ms Leonie Young (CEO *beyondblue*)
Mr Craig Hamilton (*beyondblue* Ambassador)
Dr Kerry Inder (HMRI Xstrata Coal Post Doctoral Fellow)
Professor Brian Kelly (Professor of Psychiatry, the University of Newcastle)
Mr James Rickards (Xstrata Coal Communications Manager)

Where: Fort Scratchley, Nobby's Rd, Newcastle, NSW.

To find out more about the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, available treatments and where to get help visit the *beyondblue* website – www.beyondblue.org.au – or phone the *beyondblue* information line 1300 22 4636 (local call cost from a landline).