

# beyondblue Chairman Jeff Kennett disappointed ACL rejects his offer to speak at conference

9 September 2012

beyondblue Chairman, The Hon. Jeff Kennett says he is not surprised that Mr Jim Wallace, the Managing Director of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) has rejected his offer to speak at the ACL's national conference in October, following the Prime Minister's cancellation of her scheduled speech. Prime Minister Gillard withdrew from the conference last week following comments made by Mr Wallace comparing the deleterious health outcomes of smoking with those of gay marriage. Mr Kennett said: "It's really disappointing that the ACL has declined my offer to speak at their conference. I would have thought they would have been keen to hear a different point of view, one which I believe is held by the majority of Australians – and that is, that discrimination is simply unacceptable. "It is hard to believe that people who call themselves Christians would support an approach that so overtly causes harm to so many people. "I urge Jim Wallace and the ACL to reconsider their position. STOP the discrimination, THINK about how comments you make could cause real distress and harm, and RESPECT people who are different from you," he said. beyondblue research shows that, discrimination is a major contributing factor to depression and anxiety, and risk of suicide. Gay, lesbian, bi, trans and intersex (GLBTI) people in particular, face widespread discrimination which contributes to much higher rates of anxiety and depression than the general population. GLBTI people are at least two to three times more likely to experience depression and anxiety than the broader population and are at greater risk of suicide and self-harm. Almost half hide their sexuality or gender identity in a range of situations fearing violence or discrimination – with young people aged 16 to 24 years more likely to do so than any other age group. Last week, beyondblue together with Movember, launched a \$1.5 million national antidiscrimination and stigma-reduction campaign which includes cinema ads, TV, print and outdoor ads, and personal video stories from GLBTI people who have experienced depression and anxiety as a result of discrimination. The ads and videos can also be seen on beyondblue's Facebook and Youtube pages and at [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) and [www.lefthand.org.au](http://www.lefthand.org.au). The ads focus on the outdated practice of past generations which forced children who were born left-handed to use their right hand, as this was deemed to be 'correct'. Mr Kennett said: "Now it seems ludicrous that adults tried to make left-handed children conform to what they considered was the 'right way' of doing things. This campaign draws a parallel and makes us question if some people in our community aren't doing exactly the same thing to people whose sexuality or gender identification is different. Is it all right to be left-handed? Of course. Is it all right to be gay or lesbian? Of course." Mr Kennett is overseas. For further comment, beyondblue CEO Ms Kate Carnell AO is available. Contact: Julie Foster 0409 433 501

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