

beyondblue disputes comments made by the Australian Christian Lobby comparing the health outcomes for smoking with those of gay marriage

beyondblue CEO Ms Kate Carnell AO today said that claims made by the Managing Director of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL), reinforces the necessity of beyondblue's antidiscrimination campaign launched yesterday in Sydney.

Ms Carnell said: "Comments made yesterday by Mr Jim Wallace, acknowledging that gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people (GLBTI) people have higher rates of substance use and suicide than the broader community show just how important and timely the campaign launch this week by beyondblue to reduce discrimination really is.

"Mr Wallace's linking of the deleterious outcomes of smoking with gay marriage is ludicrous. Suggesting that same-sex marriage is bad for the health of GLBTI people is simply wrong. The thing that is bad for GLBTI people's health is discrimination.

"beyondblue research shows that, discrimination and bullying are major contributing factors to depression and anxiety, and risk of suicide. The GLBTI community, in particular, faces widespread discrimination which contributes to much higher rates of anxiety and depression than in the general population."

beyondblue Chairman, The Hon. Jeff Kennett launched beyondblue's campaign yesterday and today supported Ms Carnell's comments.

"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.

"This is why beyondblue, together with Movember, has contributed \$1.5 million to this major 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 website, Facebook and Youtube pages," he said.

The ads focus on the outdated practice of past generations which forced children who were born left-handed to use their right hand, as this was deemed to be 'correct'.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 ridiculous 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 our society isn'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."

Ms Carnell concluded: "It was unacceptable to discriminate against people for being left-handed in the past and it is equally unacceptable to discriminate against GLBTI people today. It is wrong to discriminate against anyone for just being who they are, whether it be left-handed or gay!

"Mr Wallace seems to believe that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex is a lifestyle choice. This is not the case. He should have a look at the powerful personal stories that form part of beyondblue's campaign and support our call for Australians to STOP discriminating against people for just being themselves, THINK about how the comments you make could cause distress and harm, and RESPECT people who are different from you."

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