



MEDIA STATEMENT 23 APRIL 2007

## Forums increasing community awareness of depression

Four community forums in Tasmania last week marked the halfway point in the joint Incitec Pivot/*beyondblue* campaign to increase awareness of depression in rural areas and promote the availability of support services.

A total of more than 500 people attended successful forums at Ringarooma, Longford, Devonport and Smithton in northern Tasmania. More than 300 crowded the Longford forum alone to hear actor Garry McDonald speak about his personal experience of anxiety and depression and how his illness was successfully treated.

Other speakers at Longford included Leonie Young, CEO of *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, who explained her organisation's national drought campaign 'Don't beat about the bush!', and Prof Ken Kirkby, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Tasmania. Garry McDonald and Prof Kirkby are both on the Board of *beyondblue*.

The Longford forum was organised by Bill Alexander, IPL's area sales manager for Central Tasmania, Lynda Hutton, IPL's customer service co-ordinator at Devonport, and others in IPL's Tasmanian team.



*Starring role . . . Actor Garry McDonald, a beyondblue director, and Bill Alexander, Incitec Pivot's area sales manager for Central Tasmania, at the Longford forum*



*Support from sport . . . beyondblue CEO Leonie Young, Hawthorn's Simon Taylor and Carl Barnett, IPL sales agronomist in NW Tasmania, with the beyondblue Cup which Hawthorn won by beating Geelong in Launceston.*

Bill said it was very heartening to see so many people of all ages turn out to learn how to deal with depression.

"I'm sure a lot more people now understand more about depression and where to go for help in treating it. Bringing depression out into the open helps to remove the stigma the condition can create."

Bill said he had received a lot of positive feedback congratulating IPL for its initiative in addressing a serious issue affecting rural communities, particularly those affected by drought.

In total, about 2000 people have attended the IPL/*beyondblue* community forums in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania. The campaign will move to South Australia and Queensland in the coming months.

In addition to the forums, *beyondblue* has conducted 33 depression- awareness sessions for Incitec Pivot field staff and others who come into contact during their work with people who may be experiencing depression. Almost 400 staff from Incitec Pivot, its dealers and agents and other rural businesses have attended the training sessions.



*Youth view . . . Hayley Bester, a member of the Ybblue Crew - beyondblue's youth group, spoke about her experiences supporting a family member and a friend through depression.*

Information about depression is available on the *beyondblue* website ([www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)) or on the *beyondblue* info line 1300 22 4636 (local call).

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