



BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

## NEWS RELEASE

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### BLACK DOG INSTITUTE CHALLENGES GREAT DISEASE OF SILENCE

*“Let’s talk about depression”* is the message from the Black Dog Institute, one of the country’s leading authorities on mood disorders, when they begin their visit to Tamworth, starting on Wednesday 5 November.

The Institute has issued an open invitation to the community to attend the different events planned over five days (5-9 November).

The Institute, headed by Executive Director, Professor Gordon Parker, is spearheading the initiative aimed at providing support for local people who are impacted by mood disorders, either personally or in some other way, and to make sure the Institute leaves behind a legacy that continues into the future.

The visit is being strongly supported by local Members – Tony Windsor, Federal Member for New England and Peter Draper, State Member for Tamworth.

The importance of the visit was underlined with the release earlier this week on a position paper from Suicide Prevention Australia. The position paper said research demonstrated that both our young people (around 15 to 24 years) and older people (55 years plus), and especially men in rural areas, are 30 to 50 percent more likely to end their lives by suicide than their urban counterparts.

“That considerable disparity warrants urgent public attention and response,” according to Suicide Prevention Australia.

Professor Parker said the Black Dog Institute’s aim was to assist in breaking the silence by talking about mood disorders; a sentiment shared by Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, who in Parliament this week said that mental illness and depression resulted in people across the country taking their lives because it remained “a great disease of silence.”

Professor Parker said there were many components to the week’s activities in Tamworth, starting with the launch at the Town Hall, between 6.30pm and 8.30pm on Wednesday 5 November. This is a free event and is open to all members of the public who have the opportunity to gain valuable insights into the issue not only from Professor Parker, but other key speakers, including Matthew Johnstone, author of the books, *I Had a Black Dog* and *Living with a Black Dog*.

Another event is the Public Forum on Happiness and Wellbeing, also at the Town Hall, between 5.00 pm and 7.00 pm on Friday 7 November. During the Forum Professor Parker explores the question of the pursuit of happiness. He is joined by a panel of community leaders, such as Jennifer Ingall, Media Commentator, Barbara Gilmore, Mental Health Worker and the Principal of Tamworth High School, Wayne Chaffey.

The full program for the week is available on the Institute's website ([www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)) while locals will be able to visit the Black Dog Institute bus each day to obtain important resource material.

The bus is on loan to the Institute as it conducts its 2008 Bush Bash program which only a fortnight ago was involved in the Andrew Johns Walk to raise awareness and donations for the work of the Institute.

Importantly, during the activities in Tamworth, the Institute will showcase The MAP (Mood Assessment Program) which is set to revolutionise the way people suffering depression can obtain treatment. It is a computerized assessment and diagnostic program incorporating nearly a quarter of a century of sophisticated clinical expertise in assessment, diagnosis and management planning for people suffering depression and bipolar disorders.

“For a centre like Tamworth and surrounding areas, it will offer General Practitioners a tool that could have an immediate impact and widespread benefits,” said Professor Parker.

Throughout the visit, there is a range of workshops and other talks organised for General Practitioners and other health professionals.

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