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## Media release

30 September 2013

### **Businesses urged to focus on work/life balance to boost productivity**

**Go Home on Time Day – 20 November 2013** – is an annual initiative of The Australia Institute and *beyondblue* aimed at promoting mentally healthy workplaces and the importance of work/life balance.

**beyondblue CEO Kate Carnell AO** said something is very wrong in Australia's workplaces because people are working longer and longer hours, but productivity is not increasing to reflect this.

"If you're 'under the pump' consistently, it can lead to sustained job stress which is linked to depression and anxiety. Depression costs Australian businesses \$12.3 billion every year through absenteeism, reduced productivity and staff turnover. So business owners need to wake up to the fact that poor work/life balance takes its toll on both their employees and their businesses," Ms Carnell said.

The Australia Institute and *beyondblue* will release new research in the lead-up to Go Home on Time Day focusing on the experiences of the 'overworked' (those who would like to work fewer hours) and the 'underworked' (i.e. those struggling to enter the workforce or those who want to work more hours).

Early findings reveal:

- Of those who feel 'overworked', 1 in 4 experience anxiety
- 3.3 million 'overworked' Australians experience loss of sleep
- 50% of Australians who are overworked would like to spend more time with their family
- Almost 25% of employees who work unpredictable hours say this arrangement impacts on their financial security
- 1.1 million Australians found involuntary time out of the workforce demoralising
- 1 in 5 experience anxiety as a consequence of their time out of the workforce.

"Go Home on Time Day is a light-hearted way to start a serious conversation and when so many people say work – either too much or not enough – is making them anxious then it's clearly a conversation that needs to be had. Managers see first-hand how productivity is affected when workers feel stressed or anxious. That's why we're encouraging businesses to participate," **Dr Richard Denniss, Executive Director of The Australia Institute said.**

"When people are expected to work increasingly longer hours, their stress levels rise because often they don't know what time they can expect to leave work and have little job control. They fear that not working back may put their jobs at risk, but they also face pressure from home when they can't meet their families' expectations. In short, their work/life balance suffers and their stress levels skyrocket," Ms Carnell said.

This year's campaign focuses on actively engaging workplaces of all sizes to recognise and acknowledge the impact of the workplace on people's mental health and wellbeing by

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promoting workplace activities such as a lunchtime yoga class, a morning or afternoon tea and a set time for everyone to go home.

The full research paper *Hard to get a break?* will be released in the lead-up to Go Home on Time Day.

**If you haven't already signed up, it's easy to do so. Simply point your mouse to [www.gohomeontimeday.org.au](http://www.gohomeontimeday.org.au) and upload your logo to register. This will appear online as one of the Day's supporters, and you'll receive an information kit in the post, containing useful resources for the Day.**

**You can also join the conversation on:**

**Facebook [www.facebook.com/gohomeontimeday](http://www.facebook.com/gohomeontimeday)**

**Twitter @GoHomeOnTimeDay**

#### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

- The Australia Institute conducted an online survey in July 2013. Respondents were sourced from a reputable independent online panel who earn reward points to participate. Results were post weighted (n = 1409) by age and gender based on the profile of the adult Australian population. The number of respondents who were employed at the time of the survey was 812. Small variations in sample size can occur from rounding errors as a result of the weighting process.
- To find out more about The Australia Institute visit [www.tai.org.au](http://www.tai.org.au) or for *beyondblue's* tips for healthy workplaces, go to [www.beyondblue.org.au/workplace](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/workplace)