

MEDIA RELEASE

PLAYERS HAVING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

VIDEO CONTENT & PHOTOS AVAILABLE Aug. 22, 2018 - AFL players Dayne Beams, Taylor Adams, Connor Blakely and Matthew Lobbe have shared their personal experiences with mental health in a video series led by the AFL Players' Association in partnership with the [Movember Foundation](#).

Courageous Conversations touches on Beams' mental issues following the death of his father, Blakely's challenges with social media, how mental illness has affected Matthew Lobbe's family and anxiety experienced by Taylor Adams when he moved from Greater Western Sydney to Collingwood.

This series is part of the broader activity that AFL players have invested in this year in a bid to reduce stigma and increase mental health literacy across the AFL industry and wider community.

To highlight how the definition of courage has evolved in the players' eyes, the AFL playing group has made the decision to evolve the AFL Players' Most Courageous Award, presented by men's health charity the Movember Foundation, to ensure that courageous off-field acts can be honoured at the end of each season.

The players have also donated \$60,000 to the Movember Foundation through the AFL Players Care program. The money will support men's mental health initiatives and assist the foundation to reach its 2030 goal to reduce the rate of male suicides by 25%.

AFLPA president Patrick Dangerfield is proud of the action the players are taking and hopes that the *Courageous Conversations* campaign encourages other players and members of the community to speak up and seek help if they are battling mental health issues.

"As Dayne Beams bravely said earlier this year, 'speaking up and asking for help is a strength, not a weakness and it takes courage'. In recent years, we've seen an increase in players voicing their mental health battles and, as a result, the conversation around it becoming increasingly normalised," he said.

"As a playing group, we hope this trend continues not only with the AFL industry but more broadly across Australia. Mental health issues do not discriminate and it's important that we create a community where people feel comfortable to speak about their battles."

Movember Foundation Global Director of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Craig Martin applauded players for their strength in speaking openly about the difficult stuff in life.

"Living in the public eye, in a society that is so connected through different forms of media, can be extremely mentally taxing on players. Through these courageous conversations, players are helping to break down the traditional stereotypes that prevent many men from opening up about the hard times they experience, which can lead to serious consequences," he said.

"It's vital that we continue the conversation and encourage people to actively support the men in their lives by reaching out, asking deeper questions and listening to what they have to say. These simple actions can go a long way."

In addition to the player-driven initiatives launched today, the AFLPA has been conducting its specialised and industry-specific mental health training with senior club staff, players and AFL journalists across the country over the past 12 months to help improve understanding of mental health issues.

The AFLPA also held its 'Three Phases of the Mental Game' mental health symposium in July this year which brought together mental health professionals and sports administrators from across the country to explore key psychological areas of sport as they relate to mental health, wellbeing and performance.

In looking forward, the AFLPA currently completing a full review of mental health practices across the industry and the findings from this research will form an industry mental health framework that will be implemented industry-wide via the recently established Player Development Industry Governance Committee.

Download *Courageous Conversations* video content and imagery [here](#).

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About the Movember Foundation

The Movember Foundation is the leading charity dedicated to changing the face of men's health around the world. With a singular goal to stop men dying too young, the foundation supports the following causes: prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention. Since 2003, the support of more than 5 million participants has funded over 1,200 innovative projects across more than 20 countries. To donate or learn more, please visit movember.com.