

## Remote Diagnosis

The chairman of beyondblue, Jeff Kennett, suggests that Mark Latham's public disclosures are a "manifestation" of bipolar disorder. Without any medical training, he publicly diagnoses Mark Latham as having "bipolar ingredients" (The Age, 30/6). Although he does not specify the nature of these ingredients, Jeff Kennett implies that Mark Latham is mixed up.

"Bipolar disorder" or "manic depressive" is often used as a derogatory label to describe people who are direct, outspoken, excessive and articulate. It is a label that is often thrown around to explain "socially inappropriate behaviour".

When Jeff Kennett uses the term bipolar disorder, he pathologises Mark Latham's behaviour. By attributing certain behaviour to the symptoms of a mental illness, we are encouraged to focus on Mark Latham's behaviour rather than his message.

It is disappointing that the chairman of beyondblue uses the stigma of this mental illness to discredit Mark Latham's behaviour. After all, a key goal of beyondblue is to reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

In his current position as chairman of beyondblue, Jeff Kennett should know better than to diagnose a mental illness in public.

The Age, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005



