

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



Wednesday, 12 August 2020

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND WORKERS

Victorian businesses doing it tough will receive more help in dealing with the stress and emotional impacts of the coronavirus pandemic through a new Victorian Government wellbeing initiative.

Minister for Small Business Jaala Pulford today announced details of a \$26 million program addressing the mental health needs of sole traders and small and medium business owners and their workers.

As part of the program, St John Ambulance will provide accredited mental health support training to chambers of commerce across Victoria to swiftly boost mental health capabilities within local business communities.

Mental health specialists will also be embedded in industry and business associations to provide members with immediate access to expert advisors and on-the-job training for staff to identify and respond to people in distress.

In addition, the Partners in Wellbeing telephone hotline – a free mental health support service delivered by EACH, Neami National and the Australian Community Support Organisation – will be extended to 10:00pm seven days a week and expanded to also include immediate access to business advisers and financial counsellors.

The delivery of these new services will begin this month. The Victorian Government has provided more than \$6.5 billion to support businesses and workers since the onset of the pandemic.

Businesses affected by current restrictions can apply for a grant from the *Business Support Fund – Expansion* program until 14 September 2020. Grants of \$10,000 are available for eligible businesses in metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire, and \$5,000 in regional Victoria. To apply, go to business.vic.gov.au.

The Partners in Wellbeing mental health support hotline is 1300 375 330.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Small Business Jaala Pulford

“This is an extremely difficult time for business owners and their workers and it’s important that we provide practical, accessible support across the board.”

“We encourage people to pick up the phone and use these services so as a community we can weather the coronavirus storm in the best shape possible – on all fronts.”

Quotes attributable to Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive Paul Guerra

“The COVID-19 crisis is the toughest challenge many businesses will ever face, and we know that some will not make it through.”

“We also know mental health will be an ongoing issue as we move into recovery, so this program will be welcome help for many business owners and their staff.”

Quote attributable to St John Ambulance Victoria chief executive Gordon Botwright

“We’re proud to support this important mental health and wellbeing initiative that will have wide-reaching benefits to small business owners, their staff and communities throughout Victoria.”

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