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Beyond Blue welcomes Victorian Government's pandemic mental health boost

Beyond Blue welcomes the Victorian Government's \$59.4 million boost for mental health support during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Victorian Government's mental health package announced today includes extra funding to a range of existing mental health services and organisations experiencing surging demand, including Lifeline, Kids Helpline and Beyond Blue.

Beyond Blue Chair The Hon Julia Gillard AC said the package was a thoughtful response that recognised the needs of the whole Victorian community and those of people facing particular disadvantage.

"This is a significant and necessary commitment because we anticipate growing demand for mental health support as this pandemic develops. Beyond Blue is grateful for the allocation of an additional \$1.8 million to assist with meeting this need," Ms Gillard said.

"We know there are groups of people who will require more support during this crisis, including people who don't have strong personal networks, those who don't have the same access to data and technology as many of us, older Australians, veterans, carers and parents, and those who have complex needs as a result of living with a mental illness. The Victorian Government understands this.

"In these difficult times, it's vital that all people in Australia receive the mental health support they need as soon as possible.

"For some, that might mean online advice and tools to help them cope with isolation, financial and family stress, while for others professional phone counselling or online peer support will help. We know others will need more intensive, specialist support from clinicians and peer support workers. I commend the State of Victoria for delivering a package that addresses this range."

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said the \$1.8 million injection of funding would go towards Beyond Blue's prevention and early intervention efforts.

"Like the coronavirus itself, the mental health effects flowing from this crisis won't discriminate," Ms Harman said.

"We are already seeing how this pandemic is affecting mental health and wellbeing, from those already living with depression and anxiety and those who support them, to people who have never struggled before.

"Beyond Blue has already seen record demand, with a 30 per cent spike in contacts to our Support Service in the last two weeks of March. On some days, a third of people are reaching out because of the direct impact COVID-19 is having on them.

"This package offers a well-constructed plan that supports all Victorians to stay mentally well and targets those who will be doing it particularly tough.

"Beyond Blue is encouraging everyone to look after their mental health by visiting the [Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#)."

Contact: media@beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue
PO Box 6100 Hawthorn West VIC 3122
Beyond Blue Support Service 1300 22 4636
www.beyondblue.org.au

The free **Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service** is available 24/7 at coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au. Its dedicated phone line, staffed by mental health professionals trained on the pandemic response, is now open on **1800 512 348**.

Beyond Blue's existing support service will continue to operate alongside the new service. The Beyond Blue Support Service is available via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST) or email responses within 24 hours).