

15 March 2021

Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service to continue operating until December

Beyond Blue welcomes the Commonwealth's extension of funding to the Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service.

The Federal Government yesterday announced the dedicated service would continue to the end of 2021 as the impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt, COVID-19 restrictions remain in place and while its vaccination program rolls out.

Contacts to Beyond Blue's support services increased 42 per cent between March 2020 and December 2020, compared to the previous year. Contact volumes remain about **24 per cent higher** than the year prior to the pandemic.

The Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service offers mental health and wellbeing support, advice and connections to other supports and services that are tailored to issues relating to the pandemic. It is staffed by trained mental health professionals who are available by phone or webchat 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The service was established by the Commonwealth in April last year. The Commonwealth has now committed additional funding to continue the service until December 2021.

"The Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service has been supporting people right around Australia throughout a period of considerable uncertainty and we're still seeing significant demand for mental health and wellbeing support as we adapt to a COVID-normal way of life," **Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said.

"The Commonwealth recognises the need for a dedicated mental health and wellbeing service that's accessible and responsive to our changing circumstances. We are honoured to be able to continue offering this service to people right around Australia."

The service offers 24/7 online access to self-help tips and tools to help people cope and manage, professional counselling and referral by phone and webchat, easy access to Beyond Blue's online forums for peer-to-peer support, and a range of other services and tools.

Since last April, the service has:

- Attracted over 1 million digital site users participating in more than 1.1 million sessions;
- Had over 2.1 million engagements on the Beyond Blue Peer Community Forums, with 63,000 specific page views on the Coronavirus discussion thread;
- Produced more than 150 pieces of online self-help and related content.

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

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).

Contact: media@beyondblue.org.au

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