

Friday, 10 July, 2020

Beyond Blue reassures Victorians free mental health support is always available

Beyond Blue is reminding people that mental health support is available online and over the phone as Stage 3 restrictions return in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire.

People concerned about the coronavirus pandemic continue to seek support for their mental health in record numbers, many for the first time.

Calls from Victoria to Beyond Blue's support services have doubled in the past fortnight and accounted for almost half of all calls recorded nationwide last week.

Beyond Blue Chair the Hon Julia Gillard AC said mental health support is always at hand, with online advice, professional phone counselling or online peer support available to help people cope with isolation, financial stress and family pressure.

"People are seeking support in record numbers, which in many ways is good news because reaching out early can make it much easier to resolve mental health issues," Ms Gillard said.

"The people of Melbourne and Mitchell Shire who will return to lockdown at midnight tonight are making a big sacrifice for the greater good and what they need right now is kindness and compassion.

"Having been through this before, many people will be well equipped to get through the next six weeks. However, it is totally normal to be feeling worried, frustrated, or isolated.

"I encourage anyone who is struggling to cope, or people whose existing mental health conditions are exacerbated by the current situation, to seek support."

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said calls to Beyond Blue's support services increased 66 per cent in April and 60 per cent in May compared to the same period in 2019. In June, calls were up 47 per cent on June 2019.

"Early on in the coronavirus pandemic, people were reporting feeling worried, uncertain or overwhelmed and they were dealing with loneliness or family pressure," Ms Harman said.

"In more recent times we've seen more talk of exhaustion, fatigue, and concerns about the reintroduction of social restrictions.

"I want to reassure people that these feelings are totally normal given the circumstances and that Beyond Blue is available to provide support around the clock.

"It's important to remember you don't have to be feeling severe symptoms to seek support. If you're feeling stressed or concerned about the reintroduction of restrictions, talk to a family member, a trusted friend, your GP or a counsellor at Beyond Blue's support services.

"Accessing our support services is free and counsellors can provide immediate advice and referrals."

Ms Harman said business owners and sole traders concerned about the pandemic's effect on their livelihoods can also access free advice to help get their business and health back on track.

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman's [My Business Health](#) web site has pulled together a range of resources to help businesses and sole traders manage stress and run their business.

Ms Harman also reminded people they can access translation and interpreting services when calling support services.

Free interpreting services can be pre-booked from the [Translating and Interpreting Service](#). For immediate translation services, phone 131 450.

The free Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service is available 24/7 at coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au or by calling 1800 512 348.

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