

6 August, 2020

Victorians turn to Beyond Blue during pandemic

Two in three contacts to the Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service are now coming from Victoria.

Over the month of July, about 64 per cent of calls and webchats to the Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service came from people in Victoria. Nineteen per cent of contacts were from NSW, based on available data.

In June, 43 per cent of contacts were from Victoria and one quarter were from NSW.

Beyond Blue Chair the Hon. Julia Gillard AC said many people across Australia were doing it tough due to isolation, stress, anxiety, job loss and grief over lost loved ones.

“Understandably, we are seeing more people from Victoria seeking support and we want to reassure everyone that we have skilled mental health professionals who are available right now to talk them through these difficult times, no matter their situation,” Ms Gillard said.

“We know that nationally, as the economic and jobs impact of this pandemic unfolds, more Australians will need support for their mental health and wellbeing. We look forward to working with the sector and governments to achieve the sweeping structural reforms this nation needs to meet the diverse needs of the population.”

Through July, as Victoria reintroduced Stage 3 restrictions in some locations, contacts about anxiety spiked 50 per cent and contacts about depression doubled.

Over the past week, there has been a 21 per cent increase in visits to the [Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#) digital site. More than half the site visits during July came from Victoria – the highest volume of traffic from one state or territory since the pandemic began.

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said it was common and expected for people to feel exhausted and anxious in circumstances like these.

“These are tough times and it can help to remind ourselves we’re doing this to help our family, friends, neighbours, older Australians, people who already have poor health, educators, healthcare and other essential workers – the entire community,” Ms Harman said.

“We want to reassure people that our services are for everyone. There’s no eligibility criteria – and don’t wait until things get really bad or you reach crisis. Sometimes it really helps just to talk things through and get some practical advice and a plan in place to help you cope.

“Our counsellors and online support services provide free and immediate counselling and advice if you are feeling anxious or depressed, if you are concerned about a loved one or you have concerns about finances, employment or education.

“We’re each being affected in different ways and there’s no one-size-fits all answer to the challenges that lie ahead. Some people may need a referral to longer term options. Others might benefit from self-guided supports or peer support networks, while for others, low-intensity mental health coaching will help.

“It’s reassuring to see greater acceptance of digital and telehealth, alongside face to face services, and the additional 10 Better Access sessions for Victorians living in restricted areas is a welcome response in the circumstances.

“Let’s seize that momentum and overhaul the mental health system nationally, for the long term, in a way that focuses more on prevention, creates jobs by investing in new workforces, and ensures everyone can access the support they need in a way that suits them.”

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