

Wednesday, 30 September

Business advisers encouraged to use free online mental health course to support small business

Beyond Blue has launched an online training course to help small business advisers provide mental health support to business owners impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The free *Mental wellbeing: support yourself and small businesses* course has been launched at a time when two thirds of Australia's small business owners report the pandemic has negatively affected their mental health¹.

The course is available nationwide thanks to the support and expertise of Beyond Blue's Supporting Partners [Xero](#) and [Go1](#).

Evidence shows many small business owners seek advice and support from trusted advisers including accountants, bookkeepers, tax agents, industry associations and representative bodies who are often the first to notice when a client might be experiencing mental health issues.

However, advisers also say they want to know more about the signs to look out for, how to start a conversation with a client they are worried about, and how to connect small business owners to appropriate support.

The course, which can be accessed by all business advisers in Australia on Beyond Blue's [Heads Up](#) web site, covers four key topic areas:

- An introduction to mental health and how to recognise when someone needs support
- How advisers can look after their own wellbeing in the workplace and at home
- How to have a conversation with a small business owner you are worried about
- How advisers can proactively support small business owners

Beyond Blue Board Director and Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Kate Carnell AO said business advisers played a crucial support role for people who run a business.

"Small business owners turn to established and trusted business networks for advice and support, particularly during tough times," Ms Carnell said.

"The *Mental wellbeing: support yourself and small businesses* course will provide advisers, who often see first-hand how stress can affect small business owners, with the confidence and tools to play a crucial support role that goes beyond advice on accounts and assets.

"On behalf of Beyond Blue, I thank Xero for their commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the small business community and their skills and expertise in developing the course with us.

"We also greatly appreciate Go1's support to ensure the course is available across Australia to all business advisers free of charge."

¹ *Small Business and Mental Health: Supporting Small Business when they are Facing Challenges*, Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (July 2020)

Xero Australia and Asia Director of People and Performance Rebecca Gravestock said running a business is a highly rewarding experience, but it can also have its challenges.

“Businesses regularly turn to their advisers during these challenging times and advisers often have to navigate tough conversations. In a year of great uncertainty, this has only been exacerbated,” Ms Gravestock said.

“The course has been designed to help advisers understand more about mental health and how to provide support to someone who might be struggling without falling into the role of a psychologist or counsellor. Importantly, it also provides some tips for advisers on how to look after their own mental health and wellbeing.”

Go1.com co-founder Vu Tran said looking after your mental health is good for business.

“Small business owners and their advisers are a very important part of Australia’s economy, and workplaces can’t perform optimally unless mental wellbeing is a key component,” Mr Tran said.

“Enabling business advisers to take a more holistic approach, be aware of signs of stress and know how to have a conversation about that, is vital.”

To access the free *Mental wellbeing: support yourself and small businesses* course, visit bb.org.au/advisers.

Xero partners can access the course on [Xero Central](#).

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).

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.