

6 October 2020

## Beyond Blue to offer mental health coaching to small business owners

Small business owners will have access to free, evidence-based mental health coaching services under a Beyond Blue initiative backed by the Federal Government.

Under the NewAccess for Small Business service, coaches who themselves have a small business background will be trained to deliver evidence-based mental health support, free of charge, to small businesses around Australia via telehealth.

In its 2020 Budget, the Commonwealth has committed \$4.26 million towards rolling out NewAccess for Small Business.

Beyond Blue Chair the Hon Julia Gillard AC welcomed the investment, saying small business had been particularly affected by the pandemic.

“COVID-19 has brought considerable challenges for hardworking small business owners and staff right around Australia. There remains chronic uncertainty surrounding the pandemic’s economic consequences and understandably, small business owners are experiencing significant stress and anxiety,” Ms Gillard said.

“We know that prevention and early intervention are the keys to protecting mental health and preventing the deterioration of stress, anxiety and depression. This is why early and proven support from NewAccess coaches who understand the small business community and the unique pressures they face is so important.”

Beyond Blue Deputy Chair Kate Carnell said people would not require a referral to use the service.

“Conditions have never been tougher for small business in this country. Small business owners are telling us they want support from people who know what they’re going through – people who have been there themselves, so it is significant that Beyond Blue is striving to recruit coaches who have experience working in the sector,” said Ms Carnell, who is also Australia’s Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.

“Excessive, long-term stress can increase the chance of developing a mental health condition, so enlisting a coach early and getting practical information about stress management can make a real difference.”

NewAccess for Small Business is modelled on Beyond Blue’s existing NewAccess service, which is currently available at 12 sites around Australia. Since 2013, it has supported almost 13,000 people and demonstrated clinically-validated average recovery rates of 70 per cent.

Peer-reviewed research has found that seven out of 10 people who used NewAccess reported a significant reduction in depression and anxiety symptoms.

NewAccess offers a treatment course of one-on-one sessions with coaches who have been trained in a type of self-guided therapy called low intensity cognitive behavioural therapy. Coaches deliver this therapy, which has a strong evidence base, under clinical supervision. NewAccess is free, safe and available by phone or by video.

Beyond Blue will work with the small business community to establish the new service in the coming months.

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More than three million Australians experience anxiety and depression each year and the Productivity Commission estimated in its Interim Report that up to 450,000 Australians would benefit from low intensity services than more traditional services.

For more information about NewAccess visit <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess>.

*The Beyond Blue Support Service is available via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via [beyondblue.org.au/get-support](https://www.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](https://www.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.*