

FRIDAY, 11 JUNE 2021

## Beyond Blue welcomes Victorian Government investment in mental health during COVID

Beyond Blue has welcomed today's funding announcement from the Victorian Government.

The government today announced \$9.57 million towards a range of mental health services for young people, those with eating disorders and anxiety issues, new parents, asylum seekers, and those seeking crisis and early intervention support.

The investment includes \$1 million for Beyond Blue, which will support 20,800 contacts to the Beyond Blue Support Service.

**Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said more people would be able to access immediate professional counselling, advice and referral via phone, web chat or email – at no cost to them and around the clock.

"We are very grateful to the Victorian Government for boosting Beyond Blue's ability to be there for Victorians right now," Ms Harman said.

"This funding comes at a time when people are contacting Beyond Blue seeking support for anxiety, depression, and family and relationship issues.

"Although demand remains between 20 to 30 per cent above pre-pandemic levels, our skilled counsellors are available and ready to support anyone, whether they're feeling the stress of the moment, or whether those feelings are intense and persistent.

"Sometimes people believe that what they're feeling is not serious enough to seek support. Our message to everyone is there's no problem too big or small, and sometimes just talking to someone can make a huge difference."

Ms Harman said an independent evaluation of the Beyond Blue Support Service found that users reported reduced distress levels and an improved ability to cope.

"The evaluation found just one interaction with a counsellor can significantly ease distress and can result in the person taking further action to improve their mental health," Ms Harman said.

"Our counsellors also help people make a plan and refer people to other services and supports."

The Beyond Blue Support Service received more than 277,000 contacts during 2020.

Ms Harman reminded communities the Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service was also available, offering advice and support that is tailored specifically to the pandemic.

"Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service counsellors are specifically briefed about the current public health advice and are trained to link callers to other relevant services such as those relating to financial aid, family violence support and official government COVID-19 information sources," Ms Harman said.

"They can also make clinical referrals and escalate people to more intensive mental health care as required."

**ENDS**

**Beyond Blue Support Service** 1300 22 4636 or [beyondblue.org.au/get-support](https://beyondblue.org.au/get-support)

**Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service** 1800 512 348 or [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au)