



Australian
**Small Business and
Family Enterprise**
Ombudsman

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Mental health support for Victorian small businesses a lifesaver: Ombudsman

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Kate Carnell says the Victorian Government's \$26 million wellbeing initiative for small business owners and workers will save lives.

"The enormity of this second wave lockdown and the psychological distress it is causing for small business owners cannot be underestimated," Ms Carnell says.

"Given small business loans are often secured against the family home, the stakes are incredibly high and that is understandably taking a huge toll on small business owners' mental health.

"The Victorian Government is responding to the needs of the small business community, including sole traders, who will require ongoing mental health support for the duration of this crisis. This will save lives."

Under the program, St John Ambulance will provide accredited mental health support training to chambers of commerce across Victoria.

"Local chambers of commerce have direct links to the small business community," Ms Carnell says.

"It's logical to provide them with training to not only respond to small business owners experiencing stress, but even more critically - to identify the signs of someone who needs support.

"I would encourage all small business owners to seek help if they need it – there are plenty of free support services out there. You don't have to face this alone."

"The expansion of the Partners in Wellbeing telephone hotline to include immediate access to business advisors and financial counsellors is also a welcome move.

"There's never been a tougher time to be in business, so it's really important that small business owners are prioritising all aspects of their health right now.

"Our [My Business Health](#) web portal provides free practical resources to help with running your business and also links to leading mental health organisations such as Beyond Blue."

The Partners in Wellbeing telephone hotline is 1300 375 330 and Beyond Blue's Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service is at coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

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