

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



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MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR HAIR, HOTEL AND RETAIL WORKERS

The Andrews Labor Government is providing mental health support directly to the owners and staff of hairdressing and beauty salons, pubs and retail stores in a Victorian-first program to help small businesses.

Minister for Small Business Jaala Pulford said up to 10 industry and business associations would be backed to employ a mental health specialist in their team, providing direct support to small businesses that are doing it tough.

A specialist is already working within the Hair and Beauty Industry Association, the Australian Hotels Association and the Australian Retailers Association to identify the mental health and wellbeing needs of the associations' members and staff and develop tailored support services.

Confirmed industry partners also include the Victoria Tourism Industry Council, the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, Kinaway Chamber of Commerce, Commerce Ballarat and Be. Bendigo.

The Labor Government's *Wellbeing and Mental Health for Victorian Businesses* program will provide customised support for association members, recognising that each industry faces different challenges now just as they did during the peaks of the pandemic last year.

The recruitment of mental health specialists for industry associations is the third phase to go live from the Government's \$26 million *Wellbeing and Mental Health Support for Victorian Businesses Initiative*.

The Partners in Wellbeing helpline (1300 375 330) provides free, confidential, professional advice and support to all Victorian small business owners seven days a week while a mental health first response training program has been run by St John Ambulance for chambers of commerce across Victoria.

The Partners in Wellbeing team will oversee the mental health specialists working in the industry associations and be a referral point for members who require ongoing wellbeing support and further professional advice.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Small Business Jaala Pulford

"Putting mental health specialists on the floor and working closely with industry experts means that business owners and their workers can be supported in effective ways."

"Running a small business has many challenges and this program can make it easier for people who need help to reach out and make a connection."

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"The Royal Commission into Mental Health has highlighted how mental illness can affect all types of people in many walks of life – programs like this are vital to normalising attitudes and providing avenues for people to receive help."

Quote attributable to Hair and Beauty Industry Association general manager Mark Rippon

"This program will provide hairdressers and beauty salon owners with someone to reach out to for support and guidance, or just someone to connect with. They'll be able to access a number of specialised support services confidentially whilst, importantly, having the same support provider for the duration of the service."

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