

Wednesday March 29

## Cost of living pressures mean Australians need affordable mental health support early

In a submission to the Australian Government's Select Committee on Cost of Living, Beyond Blue is recommending more affordable and accessible support for people experiencing mental health pressure and financial distress.

The submission contains insights from new Beyond Blue research that reveals more than one in three people believe cost of living pressures are having a negative impact on their mental health.

The submission also references feedback from frontline staff at Beyond Blue's mental health coaching service, NewAccess, saying people who use the service report feeling stress and anxiety due to financial concerns related to rent and income pressure.

"It is clear that cost of living pressures are causing stress for people right around Australia, and that this is happening a time when mental health support often isn't affordable, available or easy to find," **Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said.

"That means it's vital that governments get on with the job they know they need to do and that job includes embedding low intensity supports, such as coaching and digital offerings, that people can access, no matter where they live or what they earn," Ms Harman said.

"Financial pressure and mental health issues are two sides of the same coin – money worries can cause our mental health to deteriorate and vice versa," she said. "Taking steps to manage our mental health as soon as issues emerge means we do better in the long run. It's important that people can access the support that suits their needs as early as they can."

A Beyond Blue survey, conducted in November with a nationally representative sample of more than 5000 people, found 37 per cent of respondents said cost-of-living pressures had negatively impacted their mental health either "quite a bit" or "an extreme amount" over the previous 12 months.

Ms Harman said Beyond Blue's insights had consistently found that young adults, women, First Nations Peoples and those who had experienced discrimination for multiple reasons were more susceptible to financial distress and mental ill-health.

The submission recommends: improving access to services and supports, particularly for people who are experiencing financial distress; improving referral pathways between mental health and financial services; and informing people who work in both finance and mental health about the relationship between mental health and financial hardship.

In addition to its 24/7 Support Service, Beyond Blue is developing new resources to support utility providers and mental health services working with people experiencing financial distress.

Free financial counselling is available via the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007.

Free legal advice about money matters for First Nations People is available at Mob Strong Debt Helpline on 1800 808 488. More information about this service is available here: <https://financialrights.org.au/mob-strong-debt-help/>

**ENDS**

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