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## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOLLOWING GRAMPPIANS BUSHFIRES

Beyond Blue is reminding residents and small business owners impacted by the recent bushfires in the Grampians region that free mental health support is available for anyone at the first sign they may need it.

**Beyond Blue's CEO Georgie Harman** says bushfires can affect many aspects of our lives.

"Accessing support after a bushfire or other natural disaster doesn't stop at restoring property or reopening businesses, it is vital to get your mental health back on track too," said Ms Harman.

Research undertaken by the Climate Council and Beyond Blue revealed that more than half (51 per cent) of people who experienced extreme weather events since 2019 say their mental health was impacted.

"The devastating fires in the Grampians region have had an impact not only on the natural environment and wildlife but on many residents and small business owners in the region," said Ms Harman.

Extreme weather events and natural disasters can impact every aspect of our lives including social, economic, physical, and mental wellbeing and it is normal to experience intense stress reactions to an extreme weather event.

"For most people, these effects will resolve over time, however it's important to seek support if feelings persist for more than a few weeks.

"Ongoing symptoms can include feeling overwhelmed or empty, anger, sleep disturbances, exhaustion, or an inability to focus. If people act sooner and get support early, it can help prevent problems becoming bigger and more entrenched.

"Tourism in the region has taken a big hit these past few months, leaving small business owners struggling due to the decrease in visitors to the region during the busiest holiday season.

"There are strong community connections in the region, which is a protective factor for mental health, but people may still require support from trained mental health professionals, to provide coping strategies and get them back on track," said Ms Harman.

Free support is available over the phone and online 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Beyond Blue Support Service.

Mental health support for small business owners is available through Beyond Blue's NewAccess for Small Business (NASBO) program.

For information, advice or mental health and wellbeing support, visit [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au) or call **1300 22 4636**.

#### **FURHER INFORMATION**

The NewAccess for Small Business (NASBO) program is available to small business owners nationally for free. The service uses evidence-based low-intensity cognitive behavioural therapy and offers small business owners up to six sessions and two follow up sessions, working with a trained coach with a background in small business themselves.

Adapted specifically for small business owners, NASBO is based on Beyond Blue's highly effective NewAccess program and is funded by Commonwealth Government. The program is not only effective at improving mental health but has also been independently determined to represent good value for money and delivers a positive return on investment.

Participation is free, confidential and no GP referral is required. Small business owners who are interested to know more can visit [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess-mental-health-coaching/small-business-owners](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess-mental-health-coaching/small-business-owners) or call **1300 945 301**.

**ENDS**

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