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THE VOICE OF BUSINESS

**BE.BENDIGO**

6 June 2023

Late last week, we were advised that the funding for the Mental Health Clinician based in our offices has been withdrawn. These clinicians are crucial for supporting our business communities!

Covid is over, but the recovery is not. It is an extremely difficult environment for business owners who are emotionally and physically exhausted.

Statistics show:

- 22% (just over 1 in 5) of small business respondents reported having been diagnosed with a mental ill-health condition by a doctor or health professional in recent months.
- Some sectors of the small business community reported a much higher proportion of medical diagnoses of mental ill-health:
  - 35% in manufacturing
  - 34% in retail trade
  - 34% in accommodation and food services
  - 33% in construction
- 37% of small business owners feel more comfortable talking about mental illness since COVID-19, which is a good outcome.
- 48% of small business owners tend to prefer face-to-face support.
- 54% of small business owners say cost prohibits them from seeking help, but with 47% of psychologists not accepting new patients and the rest having around an eight week wait time, cost is just one of the many issues.

Last week our regions also lost the GROW project. This project would have been a valuable tool over the next 12 months to help keep dollars from Commonwealth Games tenders in regional and rural Victoria.

Whilst the State government clearly needs to manage a growing level of debt, our Regional Business Chambers believe these programs are business critical for what is a modest Government spend.

With small businesses creating 98% of our jobs, support for them must be seen as a priority.

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Chief Executive Officer  
**Be.Bendigo**



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