

Ahead for Business summary

July - December 2023

Prevention in focus

Ahead for Business is the only national prevention-focused program supporting small business owners to take a proactive approach to their mental health and wellbeing. Our trusted online tools and resources are research-based and tailored to the unique needs of small business owners. They are promoted across the country by government, business and not-for-profit stakeholders.

Digital portal engagement



Check-up results

Small Business Wellbeing Plan

The Wellbeing Plan helps small business owners prepare for the challenges they might face, so that they are better able to manage tough times or unexpected situations. It is designed to flexibly meet the needs of each small business owner. Over this six-month period, there were many different user journeys. While many completed a single plan, one individual completed eight wellbeing plans so that they could focus on different priority areas over time, highlighting the great flexibility of this online tool.

“It opened up conversations and honesty that we wouldn’t normally find ourselves in.”

- Rural transport family business owner



Small business owners made plans focusing on:

- Adverse weather events
- Long working hours and difficulty taking time off
- Financial stress
- Red tape
- General wellbeing.

Small business owners were referred to the plan by stakeholders including Beyond Blue, icare NSW, Commonwealth Bank, TAFE WA and Business Tasmania.

Rural Agribusiness Wellbeing Plan

This free, practical online tool was co-designed with NSW agribusiness owners to address the unique challenges of owning a small agribusiness in a rural area.

Its design was based on consultation and user-testing with rural NSW agribusiness owners who identified their top five stressors as adverse weather events, financial difficulties, red tape, long hours and work-life balance.



“The plan made me re-think some things in my life.”

- Rural agribusiness owner

Since its launch in August 2023, small business owners have been referred by stakeholders including Rural Aid, NSW DroughtHub, NSW Farmers, Stay Afloat, Business Victoria, Business Queensland and Small Business WA. This wellbeing plan was developed with the assistance of the NSW Government through the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA).

Business Stress Test

There was a 49% increase in submissions of the Business Stress Test, with 114 completions this reporting period. This test directs small business owners to the specific support they need depending on their unique business stress. Their top three stressors were:

1. Being responsible for all aspects of the business
2. Not having enough time to do everything
3. Not having someone with the same level of responsibility to share stress with.

Small business owners were referred by stakeholders including Business Chamber Queensland, Service NSW, and local business chambers like the Redcliffe Peninsula Chamber of Commerce in Queensland.

Mental Health Check-up

Small business owners assessed their mental health through 131 Mental Health Check-ups during this period, allowing them to identify areas for action to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

- 72% had a score outside the normal range for depression. Of these, 36% scored in the severe to extremely severe range.
- 67% had a score outside the normal range for anxiety. Of these, 45% scored in the severe to extremely severe range.
- 45% were experiencing normal levels of stress and 20% were experiencing stress levels classed as severe or extremely severe.

Small business owners are accessing the mental health check-up at varying levels of distress, supporting the need for tailored and diverse tools and resources that can help support their mental health and wellbeing, and prevent the onset or worsening of mental health concerns.

Small business owners were referred by stakeholders including Business Victoria, Business South Australia, Small Business WA, Small Business NSW.

Bespoke training

As part of Everymind's in-kind contribution to the program, we delivered tailored training to approximately 3,000 small business owners to promote mental health and wellbeing, reduce stigma, and share helpful resources.



"It was a great webinar. One of the best ones I have attended."

- Tax Accountant

Training was delivered in partnership with stakeholders including Training Services NSW, the Tax Practitioners Board, Lake Macquarie Business and Blue Mountains City Council.

97%

of Tax Practitioners Board training attendees reported improved understanding of mental health and wellbeing in small business.

90%

of Regional NSW training attendees gained confidence in having conversations about mental health concerns.

Business Wellbeing Online Training

96 small business owners and employees enrolled in this free, self-paced online training to better support mental health and wellbeing in their workplace.

Our NSW Small Business Month campaign increased monthly enrolments by 217%, highlighting the importance of engaging with small business communities to increase awareness of our resources.

Small business owners were referred by stakeholders including business.gov.au, ASBFEO, Beyond Blue, the Australian Treasury and Safe Work Australia.



News and eNewsletter

Small business owners were kept up-to-date with small business and mental health news including government updates and resources, changes to rules or regulations, new research, events and resources.

Nine news items and two eNews (one per quarter) were released during this period.

Engagement with *Ahead for Business* eNews continues to increase, with open and click-through rates surpassing industry averages.



The most popular content included the Rural Agribusiness Wellbeing Plan, Safe Work Australia's workers compensation claim data and SuperFriend's Indicators of a Thriving Workplace reports.

Connecting with new small business owners

We were approached by organisations, such as the Commonwealth Bank, icare NSW and Mates in Mining, to provide expert advice and resources to support their small business initiatives. By partnering with key organisations that interact regularly with small business owners, we can embed preventative mental health and wellbeing practices within small businesses.