

## Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings.

Portfolio:	Small Business
Witness:	The Hon. Natalie Suleyman MP
Committee Member:	Danny O'Brien
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Relevant text:

**Danny O'BRIEN:** You may be able to answer, but perhaps also on notice: why did it [the small business ventilation program] not expend even close to its full allocation?

**Answer:**

The Small Business Ventilation Program was announced on 21 February 2022 as part of the \$200 million Omicron Business Stimulus Package. The program launched on 1 April 2022 and closed for applications on 8 September 2022.

The demand driven program allowed eligible public-facing small businesses to access funding to improve building ventilation in areas accessible to customers to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and increase consumer confidence.

Under the program, two types of support were available:

- Ventilation Rebate – A \$500 rebate for eligible businesses to undertake immediate actions such as purchasing equipment or hiring a qualified tradesperson to undertake minor services to improve ventilation.
- Ventilation Grant – Matched grants of \$1000 to \$5000 for eligible businesses to invest in larger projects such as building works, engaging professional services or equipment to improve ventilation.

Through the Small Business Ventilation Program, over 5,400 public-facing businesses adopted new ventilation strategies to protect their customers and staff and increase consumer confidence.

With the changing nature of the pandemic in 2022 and increased consumer confidence over the 5-month application period for the program, take up of the program was lower than originally budgeted for and demand for the program was met.

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Relevant text:

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Can I ask, Minister, then: the questionnaire indicates that the Partners in Wellbeing program continues to support the mental health and wellbeing of businesses in flood-affected communities, so how much money is allocated to continue that flood-affected support? Perhaps the Secretary or Mr Latina might know.

**Answer:**

The Partners in Wellbeing program will continue to support the mental health and wellbeing of businesses across Victoria, including in flood-affected communities through the helpline (1300 375 330) which provides integrated mental health and wellbeing support, financial counselling and business advice. It will also support embedded mental health clinicians in local host organisations across flood-affected regions to provide wellbeing support to businesses and advice on creating mentally healthy workplaces. A total of \$6.3 million has been allocated to support delivery to flood-affected communities across 2023-24 and 2024-25, to be cost shared with the Australian Government under Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

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### Relevant text:

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. Secretary, page 63 of the questionnaire indicates that \$50 million budgeted for the small business ventilation program was not spent. Only \$5.66 million was spent. What has happened to the remaining forty-four and a half million dollars? Has it been reallocated within the small business portfolio, or has it gone elsewhere?

**Tim ADA:** I might have to take that question, specifically, on notice, if that is okay, Mr O'Brien. It is a matter under consideration by the government at the moment as we approach the end of the financial year, but I can take that question, specifically, on notice.

### Answer:

The remaining budget at 30 June 2023 is intended to be returned to the consolidated fund.