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ENTREPRENEURS' PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND HEALTH - DOES BUSINESS SIZE MATTER? (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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ENTREPRENEURS’ PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND HEALTH – DOES BUSINESS SIZE MATTER?

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Principal Topic
Despite the fact that entrepreneurship and health are both rightly entitled “economic engines” (Mirvis & Chang, 2002; Parker, 2005; Schumpeter, 1935), we have scarce insights in how entrepreneurial activities shape individuals’ health or vice versa. The entrepreneur is said to be the foundation and fountainhead for all other resources that form an enterprise (Green et al., 1999). Entrepreneurs tend to be fully immersed in their businesses. In this paper, we assess whether job characteristics, such as business size, autonomy, work load and business networks influence entrepreneurs’ perception of social support and health.

Method
Data is obtained from the seventh wave of the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics Panel of Australia (HILDA). The panel comprises a subsample of 805 self-employed running their own businesses, of which 55% are one-man businesses. We compare businesses with employees with the one-man businesses, based on well established constructs that are included in the HILDA survey: individuals’ health state, important life events, family status, life and job satisfaction, social support as well as proxies for density and quality of entrepreneurs’ social networks.

Results and Implications
First results reveal that the entrepreneurs comprised in our sample are highly satisfied with their jobs. We can show that perceived social support is positively related to entrepreneurs’ life and job satisfaction. We can distinguish between private social support and business social support. Perceived private social support moderates the relationship between business size and entrepreneurs’ health and buffers a lack of social support in the business context. Other job resources, such as autonomy or opportunities to learn can partially outweigh a lack of social support but not fully substitute it. Given the fact that entrepreneurship promotion programs mostly focus on business planning and financial sourcing, we strongly recommend to strengthen entrepreneurial networks that provide business related social support. Entrepreneurs specifically benefit from close and trustful relationships with experienced entrepreneurs providing business advice, appreciation, and feedback. In addition, we think that health education and building awareness for recreational aspects should be part of entrepreneurship education.

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