





ESF is the only organisation with a dedicated focus and a whole of sector perspective on improving mental health and wellbeing for the emergency services sector.

Emergency management in Victoria today is vastly different to when ESF was established in 1987 after Ash Wednesday to provide relief and assistance to emergency service workers and their families who suffer hardship as a result of the worker being engaged in operational activities. The legislative, social and political environment in which we operate is increasingly complex and this has been recognised by significant sector reform.

Over the past two years ESF has reviewed its place and value to the sector. Our strategic plan reflects a renewed focus on the important issue of mental health and wellbeing.

Victoria depends on the skill and dedication of its 125,000 emergency workers, including approximately 100,000 volunteers. These are all people who care deeply about our community, who contribute greatly to it and who are supported by their families to do this important work. They respond on average to 7000 calls each day made to the Triple Zero line in Victoria.

In the course of their work they are exposed to distressing situations in addition to facing the same day to day workplace stressors and risk factors common in most work environments. The higher prevalence of mental injury in the emergency services, relative to the national average, has been highlighted in the Beyond Blue research report *Answering the Call*, released in 2018.

ESF's commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of everyone involved in all forms of emergency management in Victoria is because mentally healthy people and mentally healthy workplaces underpin the ability of the sector to respond to the increasingly complex emergency management needs of our community.

We can be better together when we learn, share, and implement practices that improve the mental health and wellbeing for people at all levels and in all roles across the sector.

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Why the Work ESF is Doing is so Important

Two important pieces of research underpin the work of ESF

Beyond Blue's Answering the Call (2018) nation-wide survey of police and emergency service workers found that:



20% of former employees experience very high psychological distress

25% of former employees experience probable PTSD

> 50% of all employees experienced a traumatic event that deeply affected them over the course of their work.

These Beyond Blue findings were reinforced by an international study on the effectiveness of mental ill health and early intervention programs for first responders (and veterans) undertaken by McCreary for the Movember Foundation (2019). Reviewing programs in Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Australia, the study found:-

- Agencies and organisations appeared to be working on their own
- Mental illness health prevention programs are not validated and there is a lack of awareness about this
- Agencies are trying to find the balance between getting the job done and protecting their people
- No one is applying a gendered lens to the programs they develop and implement
- There may be cohort differences in mental health prevention expectations

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Strategic Approach

We can be better together when we learn, share, and implement practices that improve mental health for people at all levels and in all roles across the sector.

Purpose

To improve the mental health and wellbeing in the Victorian emergency services sector

Bring People Together

Connect, harness, & grow the collective wisdom and strength of the sector in relation to mental health and wellbeing

Drive Research

Identify opportunities to learn, focusing on the needs of a mentally healthy sector now and into the future

Foster Innovation

Arm people with evidence and knowledge to drive good practice

Form Strategic Partnerships

Seek out relationships to support the sector to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Better mental health and wellbeing outcomes through collaboration and improved capacity within agencies to address shared issues.

A strong evidence base for programs and services to improve wellbeing

Raised standards of good practice

Maximising the opportunity to achieve ESF's purpose

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Collaboration for better outcomes

ESF brings together experts from within and outside the sector in a unique operating model to maximise the opportunity to achieve ESF's purpose.

As an umbrella organisation with proven long term focus on wellbeing, ESF is positioned to promote interagency collaboration so that a whole of sector perspective can be applied to these challenges. ESF is a small organisation with big ambitions. ESF's focused and collaborative approach to improving the sector's mental health and wellbeing is both vital, innovative, and fully supported by our Stakeholder Council, which is made up of key agency heads from the following agencies:



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Partnering with ESF

ESF is seeking to form mutually rewarding alliance partnerships that will strengthen ESF's projects through financial and non-financial support.

ESF has a range of vital and innovative initiatives which need funding support. These are in the areas of:

- Scholarships to address knowledge gaps
- Research to build the evidence base and inform our work.
- New and innovative mental health interventions
- Thought leadership events

A partnership with ESF can be tailored to provide mutual benefits with ESF able to offer value in the following areas:

- Access to new audiences, networks, and contacts from across the sector
- Opportunities to engage with your employees
- Brand awareness and placement
- Opportunity to be aligned with the meaningful work of ESF
- Reputation building by association with ESF
- Involvement in events hosted by ESF
- Opportunity to demonstrate leadership in support of Victoria's emergency management personnel
- Opportunity to participate in the development of groundbreaking initiatives

Mutual benefits through transparent and trusted relationships



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We are all part of Victoria
Together we can make a real difference
We would be delighted to have you as our corporate partner!



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