PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES SETTING

CRC SHOWCASE – RESEARCH DRIVING CHANGE

Rob Heaslip, Engagement Manager, Police & Emergency Services Program
Anxiety, depression and suicide

2 MILLION PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA LIVE WITH ANXIETY

1 MILLION PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA LIVE WITH DEPRESSION

AROUND 1 IN 3 WOMEN & 1 IN 5 MEN ARE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE ANXIETY IN THEIR LIFETIME

1 IN 6 WOMEN & 1 IN 8 MEN ARE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION IN THEIR LIFETIME

NEARLY 8 AUSTRALIANS DIE BY SUICIDE EVERY DAY, 6 OF WHOM ARE MEN
POOR MENTAL HEALTH COSTS AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSES $10.9 BILLION EVERY YEAR IN LOST PRODUCTIVITY, ABSENTEEISM AND COMPENSATION CLAIMS

MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE & PROFITABLE

MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES ARE EMPLOYERS OF CHOICE

POOR MENTAL HEALTH IS LIKELY TO AFFECT 1 IN 5 EMPLOYEES

BUSINESSES ACHIEVE AN AVERAGE $2.30 RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR EVERY $1 INVESTED IN EFFECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES
BEYONDBLUE POLICE & EMERGENCY SERVICES (PES) PROGRAM

- Inception from the broader ‘Heads up’ workplace program
- Aim - To promote the mental health & wellbeing of PES personnel & reduce the risk of suicide
- Beneficiaries – PES personnel (current & former) & family members, PES agencies
- Key activities:
  - Engaging with the PES sector (ongoing)
  - Promoting uptake of Good Practice Framework (ongoing)
  - Awareness raising (ongoing)
  - National Mental Health & Wellbeing Study (Dec 2018)
Creating a mentally healthy workplace

Understanding mental health: it’s not a static state

Diagnosable mental health conditions

Positive, healthy functioning

Severe impact on everyday functioning

HOPE. RECOVERY. RESILIENCE.
BEYONDBLUE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STUDY OF POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
RATIONALE

Why is beyondblue doing this research?

Limited data currently available on mental health & wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel in Australia

Extremely limited evidence on which interventions & practices actually work

Need for comprehensive understanding – prevalence of common mental health conditions & suicide risk, how stigma operates, help-seeking behaviours, risk & protective factors

Opportunity to achieve significant impact through collaborative sector-wide effort to respond to new evidence that will be generated
WHAT ARE THE KNOWLEDGE GAPS?

• What are the current prevalence rates of mental health conditions among police and emergency services workers in Australia?

• Which police and emergency services workers are at greatest risk of experiencing a mental health condition or suicide?

• What are the levels of stigma around mental health and suicide?

• What are the key barriers to seeking treatment and support?

• Where should we be focusing our efforts to achieve most impact?
ADVISORY GROUP

• Chaired by Ken Lay AO APM, Chairman of Ambulance Victoria & former Commissioner of Victoria Police

• Membership includes:
  - Executive leaders from agencies & exec-level union leader
  - Academics & clinicians with specialist expertise
  - Representatives of individual personnel & family members
  - Representatives of community support groups
Phase 1
What?
Personal stories of police and emergency services personnel and their family members
Why?
To provide an opportunity for individuals to tell their story and to inform Phases 2 & 3

Phase 2
What?
National survey of all police and emergency services personnel in Australia
Why?
To build comprehensive picture of mental health conditions, stigma & help-seeking behaviours, risk & protective factors

Phase 3
What?
Agency-by-agency engagement, consultation with other key stakeholders
Why?
To translate the findings from Phases 1 & 2 into practical strategies to achieve change
PHASE 1: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Aim

To gather and learn from the personal experiences of current and former police and emergency services personnel and their family members

- Each State & Territory, fire & rescue, ambulance, SES and police
- Participants recruited through a broad range of beyondblue’s networks.
- Interviews conducted face-to-face, by phone and online

Objectives

- To give a voice to frontline personnel and their families
- To validate our understanding of key issues
- To inform the next phases of the research
PHASE 2: NATIONAL SURVEY

Objectives

• Establishing national prevalence rates of wellbeing and mental health conditions

• Support agencies to identify practical, evidence-informed strategies for promoting workforce mental health and well-being

Methodology

• Current and former employees & volunteers from every agency

• Stratified random sampling from employee/volunteer lists.

• Ethics approval achieved from UWA Human Research Ethics Committee & through liaison with individual agencies

• Online e-administration of survey (limited hardcopy forms available).
PHASE 3: EVIDENCE TO ACTION

• Best practice approach

• *beyondblue* to engage specialist expertise to develop an overarching plan for translating Study findings into practice

• Plan will include consultation with every agency

• Aim will be to collaboratively identify individual/organisational/systems levels priority issues & strategies to respond
CONTACT

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QUESTIONS?