Promoting positive mental health through education was seen as valuable, as were preventative approaches. These were identified as gaps. Mental health was a stated high priority with visible advocacy from senior staff, in all agencies interviewed. Different needs of young adults was noted, and identified as a support gap. Mental health messaging was not always reflected in the broader workplace culture, or protocols. One of the strengths that we have is that social support. When you all get together on a Sunday morning and you clean down the truck and you talk about, you know, the fire that you went to the previous Wednesday, that’s incredibly helpful. There’s still that stigma that’s attached to mental health. You can put as many ads online. It comes down to actual education and caring for those that are having mental health episodes. The informal ones are the ones where people will actually open up because in a lot of cases people are able to actually normalise the thoughts and feelings. Ongoing monitoring of psychosocial risks and hazards was a priority, with a focus on operations. These are often handled with a reactive (rather than proactive) approach. Workplace culture was identified as a risk/hazard in some agencies. Some agencies engaged in proactive approaches, e.g., providing additional support in targeted areas with increased exposure. Leaders indicated that impacts were minimised through debriefing and peer support. They perceived that these supports were highly utilised and valued by young volunteers. Mental health priority

Leadership perspectives were provided through twelve one-on-one semi-structured interviews with senior leadership personnel, along with one focus group comprising unit leaders and brigade captains. All states and territories were represented.

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