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?
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 a 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
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: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF CURRENT AND FORMER POLICE & EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS
PHASE 1: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

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

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 1: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Conclusions & recommendations

• Reiterates need for national survey

• Key issues to be explored include personal motivations to seek help, available supports and risk & protective factors in workplace

• *beyondblue* may promote the Phase 1 findings to raise awareness, when we are further into the project
PHASE 2: NATIONAL SURVEY OF POLICE & EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL
PHASE 2: NATIONAL SURVEY

Objectives and study methodology are informed by the desired outcomes:

• Equipping the sector with essential knowledge by establishing national prevalence rates of wellbeing and mental health conditions

• Supporting agencies to identify practical, evidence-informed strategies for promoting workforce mental health
PHASE 2: NATIONAL SURVEY

Methodology

• Scope: Current employees, volunteers and former employees from every agency – Police, Ambulance, Fire and Rescue, SES

• Stratified random sampling from employee/volunteer lists where possible – aiming to survey 14,000 current staff, 6,000 volunteers and 1,200 former staff Australia wide

• Ethics approval will be sought from UWA Human Research Ethics Committee & through liaison with individual agencies

• Online administration of survey with limited hardcopy forms available on request
PHASE 2: NATIONAL SURVEY

Questionnaire content

• Depression, anxiety, PTSD
• Impact on functioning
• Suicidal thoughts and behaviours
• Alcohol and drug use
• Burnout
PHASE 2: NATIONAL SURVEY

Questionnaire content

• Level of exposure to traumatic events
• Working hours, shift work, impact on family
• Workplace and team culture
• Bullying
• Wellbeing and resilience
• Protective behaviours, connectedness
PHASE 2: NATIONAL SURVEY

Questionnaire content

• Help seeking and barriers
• Stigma and discrimination
• Job related stress
• Workplace programs and practices
• Risk and protective factors
NEXT STEPS (INCL. PHASE 3)

• First stage of communications plan for the Study (March 2017)
• Secure Phase 2 ethics approval (May 2017)
• Pilot the national survey (June 2017)
• Administer national survey (August-Sept 2017)
• Top-line survey findings (Nov-Dec 2017)
• Seek agency-by-agency meetings to discuss & support use of findings (Phase 3: beginning Feb 2018)
• Launch of Study findings (Oct 2018)
• Release confidentialised file for research community
Contact us

David.Lawrence@uwa.edu.au

Jennifer.Hafekost@uwa.edu.au