Rescuers at Risk - the mental health and wellbeing of emergency services

Research advisory forum / 2019

Wayne Rikkers/The University of Western Australia
### Answering the call
National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire and Rescue</td>
<td>2,975</td>
<td>2,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Emergency Service</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Answering the call

National survey of the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services

- Webinar
  www.headsup.org.au/training-and-resources/webinars

- Webpage
  www.beyondblue.org.au/pesresearch
Post-traumatic stress disorder

Employees and Volunteers in Fire & Rescue, and SES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proportion %</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire &amp; Rescue</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian adults</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Australian adults
Factors affecting wellbeing

- Good physical health
- Good sleep quality
- Participates in and uses available supports
- Strong social supports at work and home
Factors affecting wellbeing

- Good physical health
- Good sleep quality
- Participates in and uses available supports
- Strong social supports at work and home
SES Volunteers with high psychological distress – help seeking

SES Volunteers – delay in help seeking
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those needing support (%)</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>I prefer to deal with my problems by myself or with family/friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>People would treat me differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>It would harm my career prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>It would stop me from doing operational work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>I would be seen as weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>I was concerned it would negatively impact on my colleagues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chief sniper during the Lindt Cafe siege will sue NSW Police, alleging he and fellow officers were prevented from doing their jobs and the lives of cafe manager Tori Johnson and barrister Katrina Dawson could have been saved.

The officer, who can only be identified as Sierra 3-1, alleges in a 30-page affidavit he has suffered psychological trauma due to decisions taken by his superiors during the siege on December 15, 2014 in which 17 people were taken hostage.
Next steps

• PhD – ‘Rescuers at Risk’

• Beyond Blue will be conducting Phase 3B.
  • Designed to transform study learnings into purposeful actions

• All agencies offered:
  • A dedicated Beyond Blue consultant
  • Initial face to face meeting
  • Ongoing expert advice from Beyond Blue – online, on the phone, and via video link support
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