

## ***beyondblue's* National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services**

### ***Background***

*beyondblue's* Police and Emergency Services (PES) Program was established in 2014 to promote the mental health of PES personnel and reduce their risk of suicide. The audience for the Program is police, ambulance, fire and rescue, and state emergency services, and includes current and former/retired workers, volunteers and their families.

The National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services is the key project for the *beyondblue* PES Program until December 2018. The Study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the mental health and wellbeing of current police and emergency services personnel in Australia, and support agencies and other key stakeholders to take action using the results of the Study. The Study is funded by *beyondblue* with support from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.

The Study has three Phases:

- Phase 1 was a qualitative project gathering the personal mental health experiences of current and former employees of police and emergency services, and their partners and families. This phase was completed in November 2016.
- Phase 2 (the current phase) involves a nationally representative survey of police and emergency services personnel in Australia, titled Answering the Call. The survey examines a broad range of issues including prevalence of wellbeing and common mental health conditions, help-seeking behaviours, and risk and protective factors for mental health. Phase 2 is being conducted by Roy Morgan Research (RMR) and The University of Western Australia (UWA).
- Phase 3 is a collaborative 'evidence to action' project intended to draw on a range of perspectives from the police and emergency services sector on how the findings from Phases 1 and 2 can best be translated into practical improvements in the mental health of police and emergency services personnel across Australia. This Phase is essential for the Study to provide real value and impact.

### **Communication Messages *for beyondblue's* National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services**

Key messages have been developed for you to use when communicating about the Study to your members. For example:

- Using the messages in senior leadership emails/all of member updates.
- Using these messages to inform talking points in meetings with members.
- Circulating to leaders so they can promote the Study via their own internal networks.

*Key messages:*

- *beyondblue* is working together with police and emergency services agencies, unions and other key groups on a world-first national study: **National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services**. The Study will address gaps in our knowledge and identify actions that build on the existing mental health strategies and supports.
- The Study aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel and reduce their risk of suicide by identifying evidence-based strategies focused on change at individual, organisational and systems levels.

- As part of the Study, *beyondblue* is undertaking a national survey of police and emergency services personnel, titled Answering the Call.
- Answering the Call is a national survey (Phase 2 of the Study) which aims to collect much-needed evidence about the issues affecting the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel and the best ways to provide support. The survey aims to investigate the prevalence of common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide risk. It will also collect important information about stigma, use of support services and programs, and factors that impact on the mental health of police and emergency services personnel.
- All personnel invited to participate in the survey are encouraged to have their say and guide the actions that need to be taken by agencies and other key groups to promote their mental health and wellbeing.
- We fully support this survey. If you receive an invitation I encourage you to participate.
- If you would like to know more about this initiative to support your mental health and wellbeing, you can find it on *beyondblue's* website [here](#).

#### **Update on Answering the call – Results from the Pilot test of the Survey**

- A pilot test of the survey was conducted from 3 August through to 8 September with five agencies across Australia
- Pilot testing is an important part of the development of any survey, and is an opportunity to test each aspect of the survey questionnaires and procedures, and give an indication of acceptability of the survey to respondents and of response rates.
- One of the main learnings from the pilot was that response rates for the survey were lower than expected; however most respondents who clicked on the survey link did complete the survey
- In order to improve the response rate to the survey and make sure we are gathering as much data as possible we will sample an increased number of people from agencies for the survey in the National rollout.

#### **Key Contact**

For more information about the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services, as well as access to Frequently Asked Questions and the Participant Information Form go to our dedicated *beyondblue* Police and Emergency Services Program [webpage](#).

*beyondblue's* guiding principle in all of these activities is to always work collaboratively with agencies and unions/associations to serve the needs and interests of all who work in and with the police and emergency services sector. As we roll out the national survey *beyondblue* and the research team at the UWA and RMR will be available to assist your agency to achieve the best outcomes for all.

If there are additional points you or anyone within your organisation would like to discuss, we welcome all queries and feedback. Please contact:

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