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## Landmark survey of mental health in police and emergency services

Beyond Blue today releases ground-breaking research into the mental health and well-being of police and emergency service personnel across 33 agencies in every state and territory.

More than 21,000 police, fire, ambulance and SES employees, volunteers and retired and former personnel took part in the 25-minute ***Answering the call*** survey commissioned by Beyond Blue.

That's a staggering commitment of more than 525,000 minutes – or one entire year.

Respondents answered questions about their wellbeing and resilience, anxiety conditions, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts.

Important insights were also collected about the importance of positive workplace culture, and the impact this and stigma have on seeking support and treatment.

The survey found:

- **One in three** police and emergency services employees experience high or very high psychological distress compared to one in eight Australian adults;
- Over **one in 2.5** employees and **one in three** volunteers report being diagnosed with a mental health condition in their life compared to one in five Australian adults;
- Employees and volunteers report suicidal thoughts over **two times** more often than adults in the general population and are **three times more likely** to have a suicide plan;
- **Over half employees** surveyed experienced a traumatic event during the course of their work that deeply affected them;
- Poor workplace practices and culture are equally debilitating as exposure to trauma;
- Employees who have worked **more than ten years** in police and emergency services are almost twice as likely to experience psychological distress and six times more likely to have symptoms of PTSD compared to those with less than two years' service;
- **Three in four** employees who had made a claim for psychological injury found the current workers' compensation process to be detrimental to their recovery.

***Answering the call*** was commissioned and funded by Beyond Blue, with a funding contribution from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre. The study was conducted by the University of Western Australia in partnership with Roy Morgan Research.

“Never before have so many current and former police and emergency services personnel and volunteers been surveyed in such depth about their individual or organisational mental health,” **said Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman.**

“The results will arm everyone with unprecedented national data and insights from those who serve to protect us and keep us safe. It is now everyone's responsibility – governments, agencies, police and emergency services personnel and their families, unions and peak bodies, services and other stakeholders – to come together to convert this evidence into further action and lasting change.”

“Beyond Blue will support the sector to do this; to analyse and use the research findings to continue to focus on the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency service personnel.”

“Beyond Blue is sincerely grateful to every person, agency and organisation who played a role in *Answering the call.*”

**Chair of Ambulance Victoria and Chair of *Answering the call* advisory group, Mr Ken Lay, AO APM,** said: “The findings suggest a significant portion of police and emergency services personnel still have poor mental health literacy. They aren’t recognising the signs and symptoms of depression, anxiety or PTSD in themselves.

“I call on all agencies to embrace the findings of *Answering the call* and to work with Beyond Blue to determine the best course of action to improve mental health across their organisations.

**Professor David Lawrence, Principal Research Fellow, Graduate School of Education at the University of Western Australia** said: “The project has been a major undertaking and we have been overwhelmed by the level of response across the sector.

“The number of people participating in this survey is by far the largest study of mental health and wellbeing ever to be undertaken among police and emergency services organisations, in Australia and internationally.”

The *Answering the call* study is the main focus of [Beyond Blue’s Police and Emergency Services \(PES\) Program](#). Beyond Blue is committed to working collaboratively with agencies, peak bodies and unions in the police and emergency services sector to ensure the survey results are used to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

CEO of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC **Dr Richard Thornton** said that the research would enable police and emergency services to make a positive difference to the mental health of their people.

“Gathering the data required to make real changes is the first important step in making a difference to the mental health of our police and emergency services volunteers and staff,” Dr Thornton said. “This coordinated research effort has made this change possible.”

The full *Answering the call* report on the survey findings and additional information can be downloaded from 11.15am at [www.beyondblue.org.au/pesresearch](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/pesresearch)

For further information please contact the media team.

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