

# ESF IMPACT

## newsletter

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## IT'S TIME TO TACKLE STIGMA

We hear all too often that emergency service workers do not access the mental health support they need because of entrenched stigma. Beyond Blue's Answering the Call survey found that stigma is the major barrier to seeking appropriate support in a timely way when it is needed.

Tackling stigma is a fundamental step in promoting mental health and wellbeing for emergency service workers and their organisations. Many stigma-reduction initiatives cost nothing and simply require courage. One of the most effective ways to reduce stigma is to talk about it and have people with a personal experience share their stories. ESFs recent Insight conversation did this and more. [You can listen to the conversation here.](#)

**Cliff Overton, CFA volunteer** spoke of his experience of dealing with mental health issues post Black Saturday. Cliff made us think about how being depicted by media as heroes can be detrimental to mental health because it makes people less inclined to show vulnerability.

**Dr Lisa Dell from Phoenix Australia** who is leading ESFs research program to understand the lived experience of stigma across the sector in Victoria, explained just how complex the stigma associated with mental illness is, and that research underway by ESF will enable organisations to understand

what is required to help people seek help early, so they have the best chance of recovery. She made the point that including partners and parents in any intervention is vital for success.



*better together*

**Dr Chris De Groot** lead author of SANE Australia's [Stigma Report Card](#) shed light on how people in the community with complex mental health problems are reluctant to seek emergency service support when they need it because of their experience of stigma.

## REACTIONS

I found the Webinar to be really informative and thought provoking. In my years of managing Victoria Police and FRV, I hadn't really thought about the definition of stigma and how complex stigma can be both on a personal and organisation level. Great presenters and really enjoyed listening to Cliff's personal story. Thanks, ESF for arranging.

**Andrea Moffatt, Business Account Manager Gallagher Bassett Services**

I liked how the conversation combined the research and evidence with personal experience to give a deeper insight to this important issue. Definitely a conversation that needs to be continued.

**Terese Howlett, Wellbeing Health & Safety Manager VicSES**



**Cliff Overton, CFA volunteer**

Great conversation, we think courage is what we do for a living but coming out and telling people you are struggling takes real courage. We all need some support from time to time – ask your friends and colleagues today – are they OK?

**Michelle Young, Deputy Commissioner FRV**