

ESF IMPACT

newsletter



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COVID STUDY EXPOSES LEADERSHIP GAPS



The need for strong leadership in times of disaster has been laid bare over the past year. We all have a view on how our world leaders have performed. The American Psychological Association wrote that disasters could make or break a leader.

In the era of COVID-19, some leaders have risen to the challenge. Other leaders, meanwhile, are floundering—communicating poorly, not providing trustworthy information and failing to follow through on promises.

Throughout the coronavirus crisis, leaders have in the emergency services sector have faced enormous challenges as agencies had to adapt so quickly to different operational demands. Leadership scholars agree that the most essential element of crisis leadership is clear and trustworthy communication that includes honest, empathetic, and transparent messages.

ESFs most recent Insight Conversation discussed with Professor Russell Roberts, Dr Stacey Jenkins, and Assoc Professor Larissa Bamberly the results of a study undertaken by the Workplace Wellbeing Unit at Charles Sturt University. Designed to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on police and paramedics from across Australia the study investigated issues such as levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and workplace burnout. The potential contributors to workplace wellbeing during the pandemic such as workplace consultation and communication and support offered by peers, workmates family and friends were also examined.



better together

According to Professor Roberts the study revealed staggering rates of depression, anxiety, burnout, and cynicism amongst participants. It also indicated how poor communication throughout the pandemic has negatively impacted on most respondents. Recommendations were offered which could be applied sector wide.

A recording of [the conversation is available here](#).

REACTIONS

What I took away from the presentation was that the rapidly changing environment, challenges to individual resilience and the nature of the job were key stressors highlighted by the disruption of COVID.

Key message for leaders of frontline staff included:

- Ask and listen - what do you need to be able to do your job?
 - Show empathy and care.
- Debrief with staff...lead meaningful consultations.

Kevin Smith
Facilitator Leading for Better Mental Health

For me, this session has once again highlighted the importance of effective leadership and people management to enable successful adaptation in a dynamic operating environment.

Nicole Middleton
DELWP



The CSU presentation gave great insight into the impacts of the new challenges and expectations placed on our teams which we had not planned or prepared for. Lessons learnt will be critical for future planning and this will allow us to better operate and support our people through events.

Emma Atkins
Life Saving Victoria

I found the results and findings very insightful. Particularly understanding the multiple, different stressors the pandemic presented that impacted so rapidly on both workers and their families. The recommendations will be useful when engaging with employers to improve support recovery, RTW and wellbeing.

Emma Hosking
Gallagher Bassett