

# ESF IMPACT

## newsletter

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### TONY'S TREK - ONE STEP A TIME



Tony Pearce, Chair of the Emergency Services Foundation and Inspector-General for Emergency Management is so passionate about improving mental health outcomes across the sector that he has announced he will undertake **Tony's Trek** – one step at a time. This is an event designed to raise awareness of the terrible toll emergency service work can take on the mental health and wellbeing of Victoria's 125,000 volunteer and paid workers in frontline and support roles.

Starting in Melbourne in late September Tony will walk to Mallacoota then head north over the Alpine Range to Wodonga and back to Melbourne, a journey of 1440km over 54 days. Tony's Trek will travel through areas affected by Victoria's 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires acknowledging the mental health impacts that those fires had, and continue to have, on emergency workers.

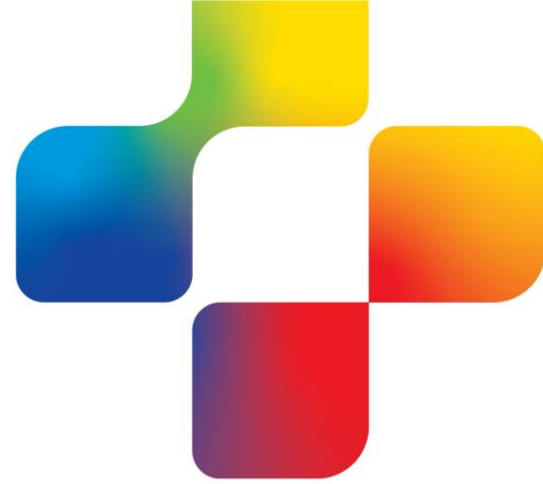
The walk will aim to raise funds to enable ESF to deliver two important pioneering programs to help prevent the incidence and impact of mental health conditions for people sector wide.

- A **Lived Experience Program** which will see ESF train mental health ambassadors from across the sector to safely share their stories of mental health injury and recovery. This will help to reduce the mental health stigma which pervades the sector and inhibits early help seeking when the chance of recovery is greatest.
- A **Pilot Residential Wellbeing Program** to bring together emergency workers who are mentally struggling to help them process trauma and develop resilience skills supported by experts who completely understand their experiences. This will help them effectively self-manage to reduce the cumulative effect of trauma and the risk developing serious mental health injury.

Despite considerable investment in mental health treatment programs and services, there is still much work required to help prevent mental injury.



Tony said, "ESF seeks to get ahead of the mental harm and injury threat that currently pervades the sector – that's why our focus is on prevention and early intervention. We must make sure we have the best possible strategies to help prevent people from our sector being harmed by the work they must do to keep our community safe."



#### REACTIONS

Tony's commitment to trek for 54 days, one step at a time, resonates strongly with me. So many people in our sector, along with their loved ones, will know just how important the 'one step at a time' message can be when our resilience is tested, or our mental health feels poor. I can't wait to help raise awareness, and raise critical funds, so that ESF's ground-breaking programs can make a difference to many.

**Deb Martindale, ESF Board member**

As one of the CFA coordinators to support Tony's Trek I consider this a fantastic initiative which shows Tony's deep seeded admiration for all emergency service personnel. The work Tony does with the ESF and the 'one step at a time' message is a credit to him. We are all very lucky to have Tony's drive and passion for promoting emergency services mental health.

**Mark Owens, Alpine Service Delivery Team CFA**

This Trek is an extraordinary commitment from an inspirational leader for a fantastic cause!

**Shannon Hood, National Clinical Manager Converge International**



[You can find out more, donate or get involved here](#)