

ESF IMPACT

newsletter



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THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT



A study of over 21,000 police and emergency responders, undertaken by Beyond Blue (2018) found that 85% of retirees had experienced a distressing work-related event that had deeply affected them and 23% were identified as having probable PTSD, compared to an estimated 4.4% in adults in Australia. Despite their lower resilience, there was very little in the way of support found to be available at this point in the career.

ESF has begun a body of work called Well Beyond to address this gap. It will guide the sector with a pioneering, evidence informed approach to supporting people to holistically prepare for and transition to retirement. Along with a comprehensive review of literature and leading practice ESF has undertaken a qualitative study to understand the lived experience of retired Victorian emergency service workers.

The study undertaken by Right Management found those who had positive transitions to retirement and were flourishing in retirement typically mentioned four factors contributing to their successful transition.

1. Early planning, financial and superannuation, but also what they will do and how they will spend their time.
2. Purpose and meaning- beyond their service role including interests, hobbies, and involvement in paid or volunteer work.
3. Support / connections - critical roles played by partners, family members, friends, and their community.
4. Health – those who were physically and mentally well had smoother transitions.

The key challenges study participants most referred to were loss of community and camaraderie, identity change, mental health impact, disappointment at exit processes and lack of follow up, and not feeling adequately recognised for service and contribution.

A theme which emerged in the discussions was lack of debrief / exit interview opportunity to provide feedback and adequately process their time in the service. Superannuation / financial support was highly regarded, but many said there was a lack of other support to help with their transition to retirement. Recommendations were made which will be incorporated into the Well Beyond program.



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REACTIONS

I think that this work is a great thing to benefit people in the future given the tumultuous times our emergency service people are working in. We must somehow mandate this, so it happens!

Lex Wade, retired Parks Victoria Forest firefighter

What this work does is establish a solid foundation from which we can build to ensure the failures of the past are not revisited. Without this foundational research nothing will improve.

Steve Mulligan, retired paramedic

Retirement is something that we all work towards, but do we plan for it? The Well beyond program will help agencies understand the needs of their people to assist in this important transition and lead to a better retirement experience.

Michelle Young, Fire Rescue Victoria

So interesting to see that so many emergency service people are interested in volunteering after retirement. Wouldn't be it great if they could use their skill in our sector but perhaps a different agency. Fantastic to see this research with recommendations to improve how our emergency service people transition to retirement.

Margaret McCarthy, Red Cross

[You can listen to a recording of the presentation and find out more here.](#)