



**Emergency Services
Foundation**
Annual Report 2021/2022



better together

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Background

The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) was created in 1987 after fourteen volunteer firefighters lost their lives in Ash Wednesday. It was established to provide relief and assistance to any Victorian emergency service worker and their family who suffer hardship in the line of duty and support research aimed at reducing hazards experienced in the line of duty. ESF's focus shifted in 2019 and is now entirely directed towards the upstream work of prevention and early intervention to improve mental health outcomes for Victoria's 139,000 emergency service and management workers, paid and volunteer.

ESF's commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of everyone involved in all forms of emergency management in Victoria is because mentally healthy workplaces, which support people to flourish, underpin the ability of the sector to deal with the increasingly complex and prolonged emergency management needs of our community.

Emergency management organisations are defined as high-risk. There is a predictable risk of exposure to potentially traumatic events whether people work at the frontline or in support roles. This element of the job cannot change, and the impact is exacerbated by the prevalence of self-stigma associated with mental health. We know this stigma impacts people's willingness to seek help early which can prevent the development of more serious mental health conditions.

In aspiring to improve the mental health and wellbeing landscape for the sector and its people, ESF is focused on prevention and what can be changed. That involves how people are managed, and how and when people are educated and supported to be mentally fit. In doing this work ESF recognises the responsibility of agencies as employers and works to complement and add value to their efforts as we strive to be 'Better Together.'

By bringing people together to collaborate and build the evidence of what works, ESF is fostering innovation and good practice. A range of strategic partnerships are helping ESF to maximise the opportunity to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes.



Associate Member



ESF is a small organisation with big ambitions. Our focused and collaborative approach to improving the sector's mental health and wellbeing is vital and innovative and fully supported by our Stakeholder Council, which includes executive leaders of these organisations:

- Victoria Police**
- Country Fire Authority**
- Fire Rescue Victoria**
- Victoria State Emergency Service**
- Forest Fire Management Victoria**
- Ambulance Victoria**
- Australian Red Cross**
- Life Saving Victoria**
- Emergency Service**
- Telecommunications Authority**
- Emergency Management Victoria**
- Inspector General for Emergency Management**
- Bushfire Recovery Victoria**
- VCC Emergencies Ministry**
- St John Ambulance Australia**

Wildlife Victoria (Associate Member – not part of the Stakeholder Council)

Chair's Report

In this my second year as Chair of the Emergency Services Foundation it gives me great pleasure to provide my Chair's Report.

The past year has continued to provide many complex challenges for the Foundation in the same way that it has for our sector and the broader Victorian community. The ongoing impacts of the COVID Pandemic continued to affect our operations, so it has been pleasing that in the later part of the year we were able to get back out to deliver our programs and events face to face, and the feedback continues to be extremely positive.

Our CEO Siusan MacKenzie and her small team including Sarah, Naomi and Emily are intent on delivering very high-quality outcomes and the valuable impact of their efforts behind the scenes cannot be overstated.

Our Stakeholder Council continues to assist in guiding the Foundation in the development of its services and programs and by providing in kind support to many of the functions that we conduct throughout the year. I want to acknowledge the CEOs and Chiefs of each of these organisations and thank them sincerely for their ongoing support without which we could not deliver many of the programs that help to drive better mental health outcomes for our 139,000 paid and volunteer emergency workers. We have introduced a new category of Associate Member this past year and I would like to welcome Wildlife Victoria as the first agency to join us under that category.

As happens regularly with Boards, we have had some turnover over the past 12 months. I would like to acknowledge the work of Andrew Carman, formerly of BankVic who was an ESF Director for three years. Andrew's advice and counsel was appreciated.

This year the Foundation has established a six-person Mental Health Advisory Group (MHAG). The MHAG will provide the CEO / Board with a range of expertise and perspectives in relation to the development of ESFs strategy and program of work to improve mental health outcomes across the Victorian emergency management sector. The appointed members have experience in a multitude of settings relevant to the work of ESF and we believe that this is an important step forward in enhancing the rigor of the work that we do.

We were able to, once again, deliver a number of successful events in this past financial year. The 2021 Emergency Management Conference was online due to the ongoing impact of COVID. Regardless of the need to hold the conference online for a second successive year it was very well attended with great subject matter and high-quality speakers. Another stand out event for the year was our Better Together lunch which brought together over 400 sector supporters and agency representatives to learn more about the importance of ESFs ambition through stories of lived experience. The International Women's Day forum held at the Melbourne Arts Centre was also a packed house with representatives from all 14 member agencies, including for the first time many males from across the sector, to build a shared understanding of the challenges presented by gender bias.

The Board has decided to re-establish the ESF Scholarship program for travel and study in 2023. Two scholarships will be awarded one of which must address a mental health and wellbeing issue of relevance to our sector, the other will be for a broader purpose which in the past has addressed a capability and/or capacity issue relevant to the sector.

In closing it is fair to say that the Foundation and its volunteer Board have had an extremely busy and fruitful year. Our efforts to work with sector agencies, other relevant stakeholders, and partners to deliver better mental health outcomes for our people have progressed unabated regardless of the many challenges that have been thrown our way. This is a testament to the sector broadly and the contributions of so many valued ESF supporters.

It gives me great pleasure to deliver this Annual Report to you and I look forward to continuing to engage with you over the coming year.

Take care and cheers.



Tony Pearce
Chair



CEO's Report

No-one could quite believe that the implications of the COVID Pandemic would extend for so long and quite how that would impact the way we all work. The small ESF team now all work remotely from different parts of Victoria and this has become a norm which we are unlikely to change. It is at times difficult not to all be in one place at the same time, but we have adapted and with a more flexible approach to how we interact have continued to deliver a range of outstanding programs and events designed to help improve mental health outcomes across the sector.

At an event ESF organized in March leaders were presented a stark reminder by the Chair and CEO of WorkSafe that we are seeing an increase in both the number and duration of mental health claims including growth in workers who are less than 40 years old being certified as having no capacity indefinitely. The sector now accounts for 24 percent of all mental health claims. This is a terrible situation and one the sector is trying hard to address collaboratively and at agency level.

We know that emergency service work is hazardous because workers take on the trauma of others which makes their normal very different to the rest of the population. We therefore have a moral obligation to care for these people and this year ESF has determined that the focus of its attention will be upstream in the prevention and early intervention space. This is an area that is often neglected in favour of providing treatment for sick people. Of course, treatment is necessary, but we want to help shift the focus to a mental fitness model to help prevent mental ill health in the first place.

One of the first barriers to improving mental health outcomes is the persistent stigma around mental ill health which, although diminishing, persists. Many of our programs address this stigma and we are working towards creating a culture where people feel and say, 'mental health – it's okay to talk about it!' Because if they talk about it, they are more likely to seek help early and that provides the best chance of recovery. This is the focus of our highly successful Mental Health Matters program for volunteers which has evolved to include their partners. The program provided volunteers the unique opportunity to present to the Stakeholder Council five ideas for mental health improvement. Quite often these programs are presented to groups including representatives from various agencies and the benefit of coming together with peers from other agencies to discuss wellbeing cannot be overstated.

Another wonderful example of how ESF leads the sector to collaborate has been through the WorkWell Learning Network where wellbeing managers from 14 agencies meet monthly to address issues of shared concern and codesign solutions. The Learning Network delivered four key initiatives this year:

- **Leading for Better Mental Health** pilot to test a new way of developing team leaders to nurture mentally health workplaces
- **A systems framework** to help agencies implement a leading practice approach to helping people prepare to flourish in retirement
- **A Well Beyond peer coaching** pilot which saw retirees trained to provide coaching for people nearing retirement to help them take a more holistic and planned approached to preparing for retirement
- **A Mental Health Showcase** which brought together 220 people including wellbeing teams and peers for two days of learning from each other and experts

Everything we do is underpinned by research which we most often do ourselves so that it is directly relevant to our needs. For example, the qualitative study we did to understand how retirement from a career in the sector impacts wellbeing. Once again, we worked with Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) to deliver an important study which uncovered how emergency service work impacts families. The report was accompanied by a powerful video made with the constraints of working remotely. This work will serve as the foundation of our growing interest in how families can best be supported as they live with and support our emergency service workers at home.

The terrible personal toll of emergency service work was laid bare at ESFs inaugural Better Together luncheon attended by over 400 people at the MCG in the lead up to the 2022 Emergency Services AFL Match. Age journalist John Silvester interviewed four people who described their mental pain and injury developed because of the work they did in serving our community. This extraordinary event provided sector supporters and suppliers an insight which created a profound impact.

Fundraising remains a key priority for ESF as we receive no substantive funding from government to support our work. We rely primarily on agency contributions and grants. This led to the launch of Tony's Trek a major fundraising initiative which will see our Chair Tony Pearce undertake a solo walk of

nearly 1500km through bushfire affected areas. The aim of the walk is to raise awareness of the terrible mental toll of the job and raise funds for innovative new programs ESF hopes to introduce. It is being well supported by agencies and we are also so grateful to the many people who choose to donate to ESF through their own endeavours.

I like to say ESF does what the agencies cannot effectively do on their own. With our dedicated focus on prevention, we can do the heavy lifting in terms of broad strategic thinking for the sector to ensure what we do meets an identified need, is evidence informed, leading practice and thoroughly evaluated. It is often difficult to measure the impact of the work we do because the sector's approach to mental health is multifactorial and no one intervention can be credited with driving change. I do feel very confident however that as an entity which brings the sector together to collaborate ESF is now a well-established, respected and highly valued partner by our member agencies.

I am so grateful for the dedication of my small team, our passionate volunteer Chair, and members of the Board who each contribute their time and expertise to ensure ESF continues to grow and deliver outstanding results.

We cannot do this work alone. This year we enjoyed the strong support of WorkSafe WorkWell, alliance partnerships with Gallagher Basset and Emergency Services Health and pro bono support from Maddocks. I very much look forward to another year of delivering leading practice in the prevention space to benefit the many people on the ground who need it most.



Siusan MacKenzie

Chief Executive Officer



Other highlights of the year include:

- **Facilitated 10 meetings of the ESF Learning Network**
- **Distributed 11 Knowledge Digests which condense research findings for easy translation**
- **Disseminated 12 IMPACT eNews to report on ESF activities to a growing mail list**
- **Enhanced the online Knowledge Hub**
- **Facilitated International Women's Day bringing together 232 women and men**
- **Hosted four online Insight Conversations which provide participants access to national and international subject matter experts on topics of relevance to the sector**
- **Hosted the Emergency Management conference attracting 410 participants**
- **Hosted 15 podcasts**
- **Increased growth across all social media channels**
- **Hosted an online workshop for Workplace Health and Safety month to discuss psychologically preparing for challenging times**
- **Delivered three research reports on transition to retirement**
- **Involvement on the Centre of Excellence for Emergency Worker Mental Health Steering Committee**
- **Involvement on the Advisory Group for the First National Mental Health Action Plan.**

Key supporters this year

WorkSafe WorkWell

Emergency Services Health

Gallagher Bassett

Findex

High Profile Events

Maddocks

Dean Niclasen – The Big Brick

Grant Chisnall – Left of Boom

Adam Broad and the Side-by-Side Kokoda Trek participants

Stadium Stomp participants

Police and Emergency Services Games

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Australian Defence Apparel

Motorola Solutions

Happy Hygiene

Data #3

Telstra

ESS Super

SEM Fire & Rescue

Hawthorn FC

Richmond FC

Converge International

Whiteley Healthcare

Princes Laundry

Phoenix Australia

Natural Magic Leadership

Sentient Co

PWC

Microflite

EML

Financial Report

During the 2022 financial year the Foundation has been funded by emergency service/management sector agency contributions, fundraising, donations, grants, as well as its investments.

As with the prior year, the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced opportunities for the Foundation to engage in its primary fundraising activities, although in the latter part of the financial year some events did occur.

The net operating result for the 2022 financial year is a deficit of \$42,988 (2021 surplus of \$146,282).

As of 30 June 2022, the Foundation net assets are \$1,557,877 (2021 \$1,600,865).

The Foundation's invested funds are managed externally using an index manager, investing across a diversified range of local and global sectors, adopting a balanced risk profile.

Financial Statement

Emergency Services Foundation

Directors' report

30 June 2022

Directors

The following persons were directors of the trustee company during the whole of the financial year and up to 12th October 2022, unless otherwise stated:

Name of Director	Date appointed	Meeting Attendance
Catherine Dunlop	11.10.2019	5/8
Anthony (Tony) Walker	27.11.2019	6/8
Andrew Carman	18.02.2019	Ceased 05.09.2022 6/8
Ian Forsyth	01.10.2019	6/8
Patrick Kidd	01.10.2019	6/8
Deb Martindale	01.10.2019	8/8
Antony Pearce (Chairman)	27.11.2019	8/8
Deborah Shiell	01.10.2019	7/8
Nicole Sadler	22.03.2021	8/8
Kate Connors	28.07.2022	N/A
Robert Gregory	28.07.2022	N/A

Objectives

The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) was created in 1987 after 14 volunteer firefighters lost their lives in Ash Wednesday. It was established to:

- Provide relief and assistance to any Victorian emergency service worker and their family who suffer hardship in the line of duty.
- Support research into issues aimed at improving relief and assistance and reducing hazard experienced by Victorian emergency service workers in their line of duty.

Strategy for achieving the objectives

The Foundation is funded by the agencies it serves, grants and general fundraising activities. Previous scholarship holders, the ESF Alumni, assist the Emergency Services Foundation to encourage participation in, and learning from, the ESF Scholarship Scheme.

The Tynan-Eyre Memorial Fund is a recipient of donations made from time to time by the Tynan/Eyre Memorial Foundation Incorporated, but the Fund is not responsible for the fundraising activities or receipts raised by the Tynan-Eyre Memorial Foundation Incorporated.

Principal activities

The Foundation now focuses on improving the hazard of mental health and wellbeing amongst Victorian emergency management workers. It does this by bringing people together to collaborate; driving research to build the evidence base; fostering innovation and good practice through translation of knowledge; and forming strategic partnerships to maximise the opportunity to improve mental health and wellbeing for people across the sector. In addition to long term activities such as the provision of scholarships, the annual Emergency Management Conference, and events for volunteer leaders, ESF also Chairs a Learning Network to increase the understanding of the key issues that challenge the mental health and wellbeing of emergency management personnel.

Additionally, the Foundation also manages the Tynan-Eyre Memorial Fund, which was established by the Emergency Services Foundation on 26 October, 1988 principally for managing funds from public donations and presenting scholarships to police officers under 35 years of age.

Performance measures

The Foundation measures its performance by the number and quality of scholarship seekers, participation at its conferences and the value of funds raised.

Restructure of the entity

On 5 September 2019, the directors decided to restructure the operations of the Emergency Services Foundation. A new trust, Emergency Services Personnel Support Fund Trust, and a new trustee, Emergency Services Foundation Pty Ltd have been established. Assets and liabilities from the existing entities are to be transferred to the new trust and trustee after the signing date of this report, following which the existing trust and trustee will be wound up. The total bank account balance under the existing entities has been transferred to the new trustee (Emergency Services Foundation Pty Ltd) on 11th June 2021.

After balance date events

After balance date, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact both communities and businesses throughout the world including Australia and the community where the entity operates. This is considered a non-adjusting subsequent event as of 30 June 2022; however, this pandemic will likely have a financial impact for the entity in the 2023 financial year and potentially financial years beyond this date.

The scale, timing, and duration of the potential impacts on the Foundation is unknown.

Auditor's independence declaration

The auditor's independence declaration in accordance with section 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* for the year ended 30 June 2022 has been received and can be found on page 5 of the financial report.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors:



Antony Pearce
Chairman

12 October 2022
Melbourne



Emergency Services Foundation Ltd in its capacity
 as the Trustee for the Emergency Services
 Foundation Trust
 ABN 79 826 649 617
 PO Box 24216, Melbourne VIC 3001