

ESF IMPACT

newsletter

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ESF Learning Network Continues

In January 2020, the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) received WorkSafe WorkWell funding to Chair a Learning Network for the Victorian Emergency Management Sector. Though this funding has recently ended, ESF will continue to facilitate the Network which connects wellbeing managers from 14 Victorian emergency management agencies to share ideas and knowledge to inform initiatives that promote positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes for the sector. Reflecting on the last few years, we have achieved a great deal by working in collaboration.

The Network's initial focus has been on leadership and older workers. [Leading for Better Mental Health](#) is an innovative development program that has helped to reshape what it means to be a team leader in the sector. This was designed based on extensive research and piloted over the past 18 months. The evaluation is now in and points to the success of the program which ESF is now developing into a fee for service model.

[Well Beyond](#) takes a holistic and integrated approach to support older workers transition to retirement by addressing a range of wellbeing issues that often emerge after leaving service due to the loss of camaraderie, identity and purpose and an accumulation of trauma. It has two components: a systems framework to guide organisations to take a leading practice approach across the career to help prepare people to flourish in retirement, and a peer-based transitions coaching pilot to help individuals plan more effectively.

As well as developing programs and tools, the Network has hosted special events including a two day showcase and webinars to provide access to local and international mental health experts. The Learning Network is provided a monthly digest summarising a quality research article and has access to a curated online portal of eclectic resources for individuals and organisations in the sector.

An evaluation of the Learning Network undertaken by WorkSafe found that we have persevered where other inter-agency groups have not and that the benefits to members go above and beyond tangible outputs and deliverables. Members enjoy shaping programs and products that benefit them without doing the 'heavy lifting,' they enjoy friendships they have built with colleagues from across the sector, and they enjoy confidence in knowing what we do together is grounded in evidence.

Network Chair ESF CEO Siusan MacKenzie said, 'This is the crux of our success and is why Network has pledged to continue working together. We know that this consortium is sustained by the enthusiasm, commitment, and passion of both ESF and the Learning Network members for driving more consistent and creative approaches to improving mental health and wellbeing across the sector.'

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RESPONSES

The Learning Network gives us access to experts and each other in a structured way. We are dealing with different issues but also the same issues and challenges and coming together has been valuable to us in the sector more broadly.

Emma Atkins
Life Saving Victoria

We all bring different perspectives, and our agencies all have different needs. We are a relatively big agency, but I always learn new things through the Learning Network. It is an open space where we are comfortable to say what we think, and to give a contrary perspective.

Sophie Barrett
Ambulance Victoria

When I began attending meetings, I was part of many interagency groups, but they have all fallen away. The ESF learning network keeps going and this longevity has been incredibly valuable for building relationships over the long term

Suzanne Leckie
CFA

We are a small agency but when we come together the level acceptance for each other's experience and the genuine willingness to learn is a real gift. Out of the list of meetings I must attend, the Learning Network meeting is one I really look forward to.

Kellie Shewring
VCCEM