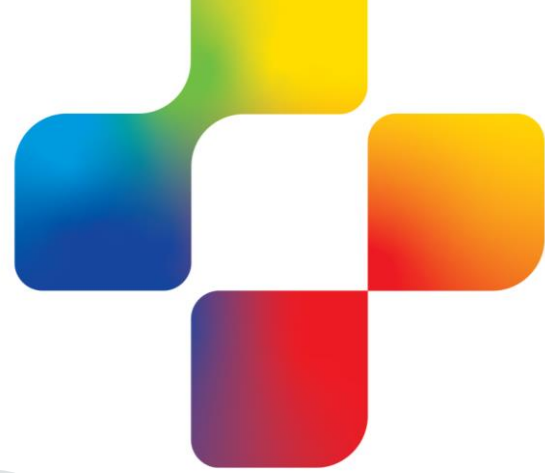


ESF IMPACT

newsletter

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Support for families of volunteers

Family members and partners play a vital role in supporting volunteers to be mentally fit in the 100,000 strong Victorian emergency services volunteer workforce. The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) engaged Right Management to conduct a small qualitative study to better understand the support needs of family members of emergency services volunteers. The findings of the study will be used to inform the development of initiatives to provide families what they need to help support their wellbeing as they support volunteers working across the sector in frontline and support roles.

Study participants who were mostly associated with CFA and VicSES volunteers, overwhelmingly reported being proud that their family member is an emergency services volunteer despite the challenges experienced.

Most participants articulated that practical and logistical impacts were the most challenging part of being a family member of an emergency services volunteer. These included being on call, the pager going off and waking up the family, missing important events such as birthdays, and the family member having to pick up the burden of the home duties. The second most common challenge articulated by participants was the emotional and mental health impacts that are the result of the work they must do which can affect the volunteer directly, and by association other family member(s).

The other commonly mentioned challenge was the respondents concern for their family member's safety when they were called out to do volunteering work. Many expressed concerns relating to the lack of information and communication about their family member's safety and how this affects their own wellbeing.



Most respondents were not aware of support services available to them as a family member of an emergency services volunteer and they suggested new ways of helping families of volunteers support their wellbeing.

Recommendations have been developed to directly address each of the key challenges identified by partners and family members of volunteers. These will be presented for discussion by the ESF Stakeholder Council which includes the agency head or their representative from 14 organisations.

RESPONSES

One of our key challenges is in communicating with family members. It can be hard to find reliable channels to promote the services that family members are entitled to. We'll be launching an induction video for family members soon but are aware of the challenge of getting it in front of our families.

Suzanne Leckie CFA

One of our key challenges is how we prepare the families of our younger members 15 years + to what they may be exposed, how they may react and how to support them, post trauma / incident, and to know what resources and training we can provide. Thanks for a great piece of research.

Emma Atkins LSV

It cannot be assumed that all vols have the latest IT equipment, many vols do not have the economic means to afford to continually update tech, or they may live in regions where reception is not reliable or stable.

Faye Bendrups VicSES

[A copy of the Study Report is available here.](#)