

# ESF IMPACT

## newsletter

ISSUE 43, 19 May 2023



## One Step at a Time for Wellbeing

As Tony Pearce, Chair of the Emergency services Foundation walked across Victoria from Melbourne to Mallacoota over the Alpine Range to Wodonga and back to Melbourne it was evident that not only the trees bore the scars of recent disasters. The people did too.

The Trek aimed to raise awareness of ESF and the work it does to get ahead of the mental health harm faced by people in Victoria's emergency services. Along the way more than 140 people joined Tony on the road and hundreds of others met him at events hosted by local brigades and units to bring agencies together with supporters such as Rotary. Everyone relished the opportunity to connect, talk and reflect on how the job too often creates personal mental health challenges.

According to Tony, there is no doubt it was hard walking for 50 days in temperatures ranging from 38 degrees to minus two on Mt Hotham, but he knew when it would end and that he'd recover. He said, "For people who have fallen over through mental ill health they often cannot see that light at the end of the tunnel and their journey can be one step forward and one back. We need to do so much more at the front end to stop people getting ill in the first place."

Tony crossed the finish line walking into the MCG and ESFs Better Together lunch through a guard of honour on 10 May having clocked up 1506km one step at a time on his Trek. The lunch, presented by **WorkSafe** and sponsors **BMS Advisory**, **ESSSuper** & **Gallagher Bassett**, saw three hundred guests gathered to celebrate his achievement and acknowledge the outcomes.



Four people who Tony spent time with on his Trek spoke with MC Ray Chamberlain about the impact of the Trek on them and local communities and how the early intervention programs ESF wants to introduce with funds raised will make a positive difference to people across the sector. Peter Brick FFM said, 'Programs such as these would make a real difference to our people who suffered so badly, and still are, post the 2019/20 summer fires.'

### RESPONSES

It was a fantastic opportunity to see how far the important conversation regarding mental health has progressed and the collective commitment across the sector to grow this support. I was honoured to be a part of the day.

**Dr Narelle Beer, Director WorkSafe**

It was fantastic to be present at the recent ESF function and witness the arrival of Tony after his incredible effort. I was excited by the conversation around early intervention and ESFs Residential Wellbeing Program. This will be a game changer for our emergency workers, building essential resilience such that they can continue to serve our State without paying such a deep personal price to themselves and their loved ones.

**Rick Jones, Head of Operations EML**

Our ES workers need so much help to protect them. We go to them when we are in trouble but where do they go? Seeing the work of ESF unite people to a common goal was wonderful.

**Shane Bilsborough, Moving Mindz**

A blog and video of Tony's Trek can be [viewed here](#).



ESF Better Together lunch presenting partner.