


Leading for Better Mental Health

**PROGRAM
PROSPECTUS
2025**





Team leaders can be a protective factor for wellbeing, or they can cause harm.

Designed specifically for team leaders in emergency service organisations, **Leading for Better Mental Health** is an evidence informed program that takes an action learning approach to help shape participant's ability to create and sustain psychologically safe workplace environments.

This is no ordinary leadership development program. It was informed by a comprehensive literature review and nine months of conversations and targeted evidence gathering activities across Victorian emergency services agencies. This led to the identification of a learning and development opportunity for team leaders who are often promoted without the necessary support to build their leadership capability with a lens on psychological safety. ESF's review found the gap between leading practice and existing leadership styles was evident across the sector.

This unique program, codesigned by ESF in collaboration with the wellbeing managers from fourteen Victoria

Emergency Services organisations, meets the development needs of anyone responsible for leading a team. Evaluation by Charles Sturt University found regardless of the agency/organisation team leaders belonged to, they shared common leadership challenges and benefited from multi-agency program participation.

The external evaluation also demonstrated program content to be effective in shaping team leaders' confidence and capability to rethink their approach to people management with a stronger focus on psychological safety. Additionally, the program was observed to be highly valued by participants and agency sponsors alike.

After successfully running the program for participants across the Victorian Emergency Services sector ESF is now excited to offer the program on a fee for service basis to interstate agencies across the emergency management sector.

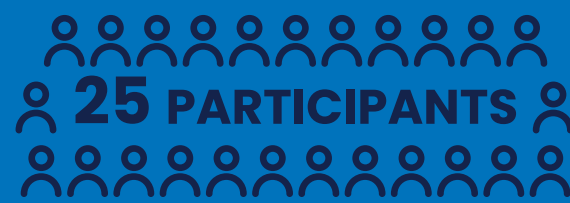
1
DAY

2
DAY

8 WEEKS
WORKPLACE PRACTICE
AND COACHING SUPPORT

3
DAY

4
DAY



Who should attend?

New and emerging middle managers in emergency management organisations with responsibility for a team of people.

Duration

Four days face to face. This is broken into Days 1 & 2 separated by around eight weeks of workplace practice and coaching support before meeting again to conclude the program with Days 3 & 4.

Each program has an ideal cohort of 25 team leader participants which enables effective group discussion and peer support.

The Learning Approach

Participants in this program are not a number or a name on a page. They come into the program having already met and discussed their leadership challenges with a facilitator. This is enormously helpful in building engagement, connection and commitment to the program outcomes. It also provides the facilitators important insight into the needs of participants in a particular program.

A simple baseline survey further helps establish and understand their attitudes to leadership and wellbeing. This is repeated at the completion of the program to encourage reflection and identify shifts.

This is not a standard training program where participants experience 'death by PowerPoint' and are talked at. Learning happens through experience, and this begins with the very first activity which aims to build an understanding of vulnerability, empathy and the value of connection through story telling. This theme continues throughout the program.

The cohort is split into small working groups to develop connection, test ideas and apply learning. The groups continue to support each other through the period of workplace practice where each individual is required to address a psychosocial hazard within their remit. Through this period everyone is further supported by one of the facilitators as a coach.

When participants return on Days 3&4 they share their workplace practice experience and benefit from hearing and commenting on the experience of the entire group.

Most leadership training in emergency services assumes the command-and-control operational context. This program addresses the needs of leaders for the 90% of the time when they are not in an emergency response context.

Dr Shannon Hood

The best program of its type I have ever attended. We always make excuses that we are too busy for things like this, but it was so worth it, and I feel it will turn our team around in a very positive way.

Participant Biodiversity Victoria



Learning Outcomes

Participants in the program can expect to:

- Understand how personal leadership style impacts psychological safety
- Increase capacity to recognise barriers and enablers to psychological safety.
- Develop and practice new ways of leading to support psychological safety.
- Enhance communication skills to foster psychological safety
- Develop skills to lead teams in challenging environments with a focus on wellbeing

I now have a greater understanding of mental health and the impact that a good manager can have on the team. The program gave me a good understanding on how to structure difficult conversations, both around performance management and mental health

– Participant Victoria Police

Organisational benefits

- Increased organisational capability to positively impact psychological safety in the workplace
- Assist organisational capacity to meet compliance requirements in relation to psychosocial regulations.
- New systems and processes developed by participants to address issues that can be applied for wider organisational benefit.
- Cadre of champions and role models created with confidence to shift the narrative and practice around psychological safety.

Key program differentiators

- No other program exists that addresses the issue of psychological safety by providing such an action learning coaching model
- This evidence informed program has been developed specifically by and for the emergency management sector to meet a learning and development gap
- Facilitators have a depth of experience in the emergency management sector



Investment

\$45,000 (incl GST) for up to 25 participants. For a full cohort this equates to \$1,800 per person.

Larger groups will attract an additional cost of \$360 per person to cover additional collateral, administration and coaching costs.

This includes:

- Facilitation and associated costs
- Management of program enrolments to streamline initial conversations with facilitators.
- All printed program materials
- Program Coordinator provided for Days 1 & 2 to assist with administration

*Notes:

- Venue hire and catering is not included in this fee to allow for organisational preferences. Discussion is required regarding suitability of the preferred space.
- These costs are based on a Victorian location, if your organisation is not based in Victoria interstate travel for facilitators and program coordinator will be an additional cost.

The training has given me tangible insights and tools to help shape my approach to leadership

- Participant Wildlife Victoria



Facilitators



Dr Shannon Hood is a Senior Clinical Counsellor and trainer with ESF with more than 20 years' experience providing mental health services specialising in working with emergency services personnel. He participated in debriefing DEECA staff following the 2024 floods and attended those events providing mental health support to IMT members. He has worked at the State Control Centre and as an on-site EAP Consultant for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. He served for 13 years as a technical rescue specialist with the SES in South Australia and is an operational volunteer firefighter with the CFA. He has worked with ESF to develop and deliver a range of programs and always receives exceptionally positive feedback. He entered the mental health industry after finishing as a Senior Manager with Deloitte.



Phil Shepherd had a 26-year career with Victoria Police. He is an experienced leader and dynamic facilitator who is deeply enthusiastic about leadership and helping teams and individuals reach their full potential. A graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School's Art and Practice of Leadership Development, Phil has developed and delivered a range of innovative and transformative leadership programs and bespoke workshops. He was the Director of Leadership and Academic Programs at the Australian Institute of Police Management for ten years and helped establish the Airlie leadership Development Centre where he was responsible for the design and delivery of a variety of culture and leadership programs for police and commercial clients. He has worked with ESF to design and deliver the Leading for Better Mental Health Program and is well regarded for his ability to establish rapport, share vulnerably and demonstrate how to build a high trust relationship quickly.

