

The National

Firefighter

VOL 3 EDITION 1

Summer Edition

INSIDE

Men's Talk

**EMDR
For First
Responders**

SA Volunteer
Fire Fighters
Museum

**THE DOGS
CONNECT
PROGRAM**

Relapse Is Not
The End, It Is Part
Of The Journey



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An Editorial Board is in place for the magazine. The Board includes a number of experienced Fire Fighters who offer expertise in various areas of Fire Fighting. The Board's role will be to oversee articles to ensure the content and information is accurate and timely, and to provide advice on direction for the journal.

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www.thenationalfirefighter.com.au

ABOUT US

The National Firefighter is a journal delivered to Firefighters and selected universities across Australia. Our mission is to support Firefighters through the sharing of knowledge and information from across Australia, and at the same time aid Firefighters through delivering current information from recognised leaders in the field. We are independent from any employer, associations or groups and our aim is simply to provide current, relevant information to Australian Firefighters.

The National Firefighter will evolve over time with feedback and review from readers and industry peers. The aim of The National Firefighter is to share knowledge and commentary from experts in the field, as well as provide background information.

Editor's Note



Research shows our first responders are more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition than the overall Australian population. They are more than twice as likely to think about suicide and three more times as likely to have a suicide plan. This is WHY we publish a plethora of articles on mental health, written by passionate experts in this field, is just SO important to adjust our thinking, to choose our words carefully, to speak out against stigma and to talk openly about mental health.

As part of their professional activities, first responders are regularly exposed to a wide range of physically and psychologically demanding stressors. First responders intervene to assist and protect the community in emergency and crises situations.

There is a growing body of research that indicates that this type of emergency service work may come at a cost in terms of mental health and wellbeing of those undertaking these vital activities.

WHY IS TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

By not talking about mental health, it adds to the stigma that surrounds it,

A clear distinction is often made between “mind and body” But mental and health and physical health should not be thought of as separate. There are various ways in which poor mental health has been shown to be detrimental to physical health and vice versa.

Firefighters are also educators, as they play a crucial role in educating the public about fire safety and prevention. They visit schools, community centers and other public spaces to teach children and adults about fire safety measures, such as how to escape a burning building and how to use a fire extinguisher. By spreading awareness and knowledge, firefighters help prevent fires and save lives.

Firefighters understand the importance of building strong relationships within the community. They actively engage in public relations efforts by participating in media interviews, writing articles for local publications, maintaining social media accounts to share fire safety tips and updates. By fostering positive relationships with the community, firefighters enhance trust and support for their work.

Firefighters are an integral part of our

community, serving as first responders, community helpers and educators. They face numerous dangers and risks while performing their duties, but continue to display bravery and sacrifice to protect lives and property. It is crucial that we support firefighters in their work by advocating for proper training and resources, promoting fire safety education and recognizing their heroic acts. By doing so we can ensure that firefighters continue to serve our communities effectively, and make a positive impact on the lives of those they protect.

A quote for this edition: “What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor and more unashamed conversation” (Glenn Close)

As always, Thank you for all our valuable contributors and supporters. And Thank You to ALL our emergency services workers, including our firefighters, for the work that they do.

Leigh Leonard
Editor
The National Firefighter



THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY LONG WALK

The Long Walk is a charity inspired by Michael Long's walk to Canberra, to get the lives of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people back on the national agenda.

Our main work is running educational and cultural programs in schools.



The Little Long Walk

- Leading up to the day – make banners focusing on Aboriginal storytelling through artwork and symbols
- Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony
- Walk & undertake cultural activities



Ganbu Gulin (One Mob in Woi Wurrung language)

- Creating a safe environment for First Nations students
- 6 – 8 weeks of different cultural activities – dance, bush tucker, art, games, mindfulness
- Forming connections with other Aboriginal and or Torres Strait

To keep the journey going and for The Long Walk to deliver these programs please donate

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The Long Walk: Walking the talk of reconciliation

Twenty years ago, Michael Long set out on a walk from Melbourne to Canberra to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights.

Along the way, he won hearts and rallied a nation who now walk alongside him each year as part of the Long Walk in the hopes of a better, fairer future for all Australians.

Last year, the former Essendon AFL legend and his Long Walk team were honoured for their education programs, community events and outreach with the City of Melbourne's prestigious Aboriginal Melbourne ganbu guljin Award.

Leanne Brooke, Executive General Manager, The Long Walk, was thrilled to be counted among the other nominees in the category.

"We have great relationships with all of them and think they do amazing work, so it was a truly humbling to take home the prize."

While the annual Long Walk to the Dreamtime at the 'G game is their biggest and most iconic event, the small team of four is kept busy with year-round programs and smaller community-led walks to spread their message of respect, equality and inclusion.

"Our foundation is as much about empowering the Aboriginal community as it is about teaching non-Aboriginal people about our histories, cultures and the wealth of knowledge and wisdom that has always existed among our people," Leanne said.

"There has been a lot of progress in the

Caption: The Long Walk team accepting their Aboriginal Melbourne ganbu guljin Award at the Melbourne Awards gala in 2023



two decades since Michael first walked to Canberra, but there is still more to do."

Michael – AFL Hall of Famer, and the first Aboriginal player to captain an AFL team – has long been an advocate for the rights of First Nations People, but it hasn't been an easy road.

After being vilified by another player during an Anzac Day game in 1995, he went home to his partner and seriously considered whether he had a future in the game.

"At the time, there were very few First Nations players in the league, and Michael's partner encouraged him to do something to make it a more welcoming space," Leanne said.

So, he met with his coach and the Essendon Football Club advocated for the AFL to introduce the landmark racial anti-vilification policy, known today as the Peek Rule.

"This was a major systemic change for the AFL – the result of one person taking charge and advocating for better," Leanne said.

Michael's advocacy continued off-field, even after he retired from the game in 2001.

"Michael was returning from a family funeral one day – it was one of many

he'd attended around that time – and he got to reflecting on his people and what was happening to them," Leanne said.

"He felt First Nations peoples were being disempowered – they were dying too young, kids weren't going to uni, or getting jobs."

Michael felt something drastic needed to be done, so he started walking to Canberra to speak to then Prime Minister, John Howard.

Once the word got out, he was joined by family, friends and teammates, as well as fellow Australians.

"Some walked for hours, some for days, some the whole way, and those original walkers are still part of a core group that leads the Long Walk each year," Leanne said.

Along the way, people opened their homes, provided food and water and fellowship.

It took a lot of effort to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister, and when Michael finally walked in the door, his agenda was simple. He asked the Prime Minister just one question: "Where is



Michael Long at the MCG, as part of the Long Walk

Melburnians enjoy the festivities at Fed Square as part of the Long Walk

the love, where is the love for Australia's First Peoples?"

His story inspired the nation, and soon Michael was inundated with requests from schools, organisations and individuals who wanted answers to this same question.

"People were eager to stand alongside Michael and demonstrate their allyship," Leanne said.

The Long Walk team now runs Walk the Talk school sessions, Little Long Walks in pre-schools, schools and sporting clubs, as well as cultural competency training and the Ganbu Gulin Program for Aboriginal students.

"Ganbu Galin is about helping young Aboriginal kids find connection with each other, community and culture," Leanne said.

"It helps them strengthen their voice."

The feedback from the program has been glowing, resulting in better attendance and overall engagement at school, as well as increased cultural pride.

"A lot of the kids feel more connected following the program. When they walk by other First Nations kids in the corridor they talk to each other now," Leanne said.

"At one school, there were two brothers who thought they were the only Aboriginal kids on campus. turns out

they were two of 20.

"Ganbu Gulin changed that for them, and opened up a whole new community."

Program alumni are now advocating for themselves in their schools, calling for their cultures and heritage to be given more of a platform.

"Our truth-telling in schools and in the community is about celebrating our resilience and survival, teaching our diverse languages and cultures so that they are maintained for years to come."

The result of the recent referendum was a blow to the Long Walk team.

"We were devastated, but Michael took it upon himself to ring and check in with staff.

"He said: 'This doesn't change anything. We keep doing what we've done for years, we get up, we keep pushing, because children are our future.'"

For Leanne, it's the diversity of the work that inspires her.

"Each day, with each program, we get to send a powerful message and enable true self-determination.

"It's not a one-off thing either. We include everyone in the community. One of our guiding principles is that "everyone is welcome around our campfire". We might start doing one of the school talks, and then a Little Long Walk, and then people get involved in

the big walks.

"We keep going back into these communities because they keep asking.

Written by Zoe Bradley and reprinted with the permission of Melbourne City Council.



Michael's story has inspired the next generation of advocates



Relapse can serve as an opportunity to strengthen your recovery plan and emerge more resilient than ever.

The journey from addiction to recovery is certainly challenging, often marked by setbacks. For many, these setbacks come in the form of relapse. It's important to remember that while relapse can feel like a failure, it does not mark the end of your recovery journey; in fact for many, it's part of it. Recovery is a lifelong commitment and relapse can serve as an opportunity to strengthen your recovery plan and emerge more resilient than ever.

What Defines a Relapse?

First, it's important to understand the difference between a lapse and a relapse. A lapse, or slip-up, is a short-lived, often accidental return to substance use, usually as the result of inadequate coping strategies. A relapse, on the other hand, is a sustained return to heavy and frequent substance use that existed before your treatment or

commitment to change.

This distinction is critical because it influences how you handle your behaviour post-incident. If you view any substance use as a complete relapse you can engage what is referred to as the Abstinence Violation Effect. This can lead to a negative mental cycle where you begin to see yourself as a failure, attributing your lapse to uncontrollable internal factors, and leading to a spiral of guilt and shame, which can induce more substance use.

It is much more beneficial if you maintain perspective, seeing a binge or a slip-up as a temporary lapse in judgement so you can minimise the lapse and quickly return to the recovery path. If you've had a lapse, it's important to focus on elements in your control, such as understanding your personal triggers, enhancing coping strategies and bolstering your support networks.

Why Does Relapse Happen?

Relapse often occurs in response to a trigger or combination of triggers. Positive triggers such as encountering certain people, places, or situations associated with past substance use can trigger cravings. The same can happen if you encounter negative triggers, such as hardships or difficulties that in turn spark a longing for the substance.

Common Triggers for Relapse Include:

- **Pain or Discomfort from Withdrawal Symptoms:** The physical and psychological discomfort experienced during withdrawal can be intense and persistent, leading individuals to seek relief through substance use.
- **Unpleasant Emotions:** Feelings such as hunger, anger, loneliness, and fatigue can create a heightened sense of vulnerability and a desire to escape through substance use.
- **Isolation:** Spending too much time alone with one's thoughts can lead

to negative thinking patterns and increased cravings. Isolation can amplify feelings of loneliness and boredom, creating a void that you might feel tempted to fill with substance use.

- **Social Situations:** Interacting with people who are using drugs or alcohol or who were part of your past substance-using social circles can create significant pressure to relapse. The desire to fit in, or direct encouragement can be powerful motivators for returning to substance use.

- **Environmental Cues:** Spending time in places where substance use previously occurred, such as bars, clubs, or certain neighbourhoods, can trigger strong memories and cravings, which can be hard to resist.

- **Big Life Events:** Major life changes, such as losing a job, the death of a loved one, divorce, or other stressful events, can trigger a relapse. Even positive events like promotions, marriages, or births can create stress that leads to cravings.

- **Overconfidence:** Believing that you have complete control over your addiction, especially in risky situations, can be dangerous. This overconfidence can lead to underestimating the power of your triggers and placing yourself in high-risk situations unnecessarily.

- **Unresolved Trauma:** Past trauma or PTSD that has been inadequately addressed in therapy can resurface and trigger a desire to use substances as a coping mechanism.

- **Financial Stress:** Struggling with financial difficulties can lead to feelings of hopelessness and desperation, increasing the temptation to use substances as an escape.

Without an emergency plan, a strong support network, or enhanced coping skills, the temptation to use can

become overwhelming. It's important to remember that just as addiction involves learning mechanisms in the brain, so does recovery. It's a learning process, and does not occur overnight. It's about training your brain not to turn to substances in times of adversity or longing.

What to Do if You Relapse

Experiencing a relapse is emotionally painful, but you need to remember that all hope is not lost. If you feel you have relapsed, or relapse is imminent, here are some actionable steps you can take to turn things around:

1. **Reflect on Triggers:** Understand the emotional, physical, situational or relational experiences that preceded, or are likely to proceed, your relapse. Reflecting on these can help you identify vulnerabilities and develop strategies to avoid or cope with similar situations in the future.

2. **Ask for Help:** Seek support from family, friends or mental health professionals, and refocus your efforts on recovery. Consider finding a personalised rehabilitation program, intensifying therapy, or joining a peer support group so you can access immediate assistance and ongoing support.

3. **Boost Self-Care via a Daily Schedule:** Prioritise your self-care, being mindful to maintain healthy social, emotional and physical habits. Get plenty of exercise, make healthy dietary choices, ensure sufficient sleep and resist the urge to isolate. A structured daily schedule helps maintain focus and reduces opportunities for relapse.

4. **Continue Changing Your Life:** Recovery involves building a new, fulfilling life that is not centred around substance use. Focus on renewing old interests, developing new ones, changing negative thinking patterns

and creating new routines and friendships.

5. **Develop a Relapse Prevention Plan:** Keep a detailed relapse prevention plan handy if you feel yourself slipping. This plan should specify your triggers, list your coping skills and include contact information for immediate support.

6. **Forgive Yourself:** Changing habits of any kind takes time, so viewing success and failure as all-or-nothing is counterproductive. Setbacks are a normal part of addiction recovery. Forgiving yourself for slipping up can enhance future performance and help you get back on track.

Continue Your Recovery Journey with Hope in Health

If you are struggling with relapse and need help getting back on track, reach out to our team today. At Hope in Health we tailor our addiction rehabilitation programs to you, working alongside you to ensure you get the support you need. Combining holistic and integrated rehabilitation treatment practices, we provide life-changing treatment for alcohol and substance addiction to build strength and resiliency strategies that lead to genuine healing.

With Hope in Health, your recovery journey doesn't end when you leave our centre. We offer a no-cost transitional support guarantee, providing intuitive continued support to help you develop sustained habits as you transition back to everyday environments, friends and communities. Remember, relapse is not the end. It's a part of your journey to a healthier, happier life.

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Tourette Syndrome

“Your son has Tourette Syndrome” The psychiatrist uttered to my parents as I played with my

GI Joe’s on the Doctors office floor.

“What does that mean?” I asked myself as my parents confusingly mumbled their way around a few questions as they were just as dumbfounded as I was.

Let me introduce myself, my name is Seamus Evans, I speak in schools and conference around the country on resilience and pursuing your passion.

I spent the first 16 years of my career hosting TV and radio shows around Australia. (Toasted TV, Totally Wild, Hit Fm, Sea Fm)

I know what you’re thinking, “How did you work on TV and Radio with Tourette’s?”

The answer... A beep button... kidding, I don’t have the swearing Tourette’s. Only 10% of the population of people living with Tourette Syndrome have that. It’s called Coprolalia.

Let’s go back to that doctor’s office all those years ago. I remember distinctly going to the Mater children’s hospital and hearing the doctors’ words,

“Tourette Syndrome”.

What the F*#K is that? No one had never even heard of this strange syndrome before. And what does this mean?

Let me explain it in laymen’s terms. I twitch...

These twitches are called ‘Tics’.

The way it works is, everyone’s brain sends unwanted signals to the body. Everyone has a gate to keep the unwanted signals from firing through. People with Tourette’s have a weak gate, so the signals get through.

Just like not shutting the gate in the backyard properly, your dog is probably going to get out.

These signals commonly are things like barking, sniffing, grunting, shoulder shrugs, blinking, clicking fingers etc.

This syndrome is a cousin to ADHD, Autism and OCD. It falls under the neurodiverse umbrella.

We all have something, we all have an insecurity, flaw, setback, challenge or adversity of some kind.

I believe these are self-appointed setbacks. We allow them to stand in the

way of our dreams and goals. But they only limit us or rob us of our potential, if we let them.

Once upon a time, I hated having Tourette Syndrome because it made me different. But now I love it, because it makes me different.

Straight out of failing high school, I landed a job as a host of a tv show called “Toasted TV”. It was a kids program on Network 10.

However, a week in, my boss pulled me aside to question me about these odd twitches. He was shocked to learn it was Tourette Syndrome, and not having the full understanding he was scared he had hired the wrong person. So he dangled a poison carrot in front of me and stated “If it’s a problem, I will just fire you and hire someone else”

That was the moment my life changed forever.

Not for being punished or victimised for something out of my control, but I was provided an opportunity to take control of my own life.

We are all blessed with decisions every day. We overthink if we make the right decision, instead of making the decision right.

Not wanting my dream job to be taken away from me before I got a chance to start it, I was forced to redirect my tics so the camera wouldn’t see it.

Every day I would wake up and focus on learning how to take an over-the-top head flick to a stomach roll. Or a grunt to a throat clearing. And an eye flick to a tensing of the buttocks.

I won’t lie, it was tough, but the alternative was harder. Losing my dream job.

Fast forward to 2020 and I am 13 years into a media career that I never thought was possible due to my diagnosis all those years ago in that doctors office. But through pure determination, I managed to last that long.

I was hosting a breakfast radio show at the time in Cairns and at 9:05am we were called into the boss’ office after our morning show was completed.

“Due to covid 19, we’re making national cut backs and making all regional breakfast teams redundant. Thank you for all of your hard work, but tomorrow will be your last show”

I was ecstatic. Overjoyed and beside myself with excitement. One because I was about to get a pay day and two because I looked back at the 13 years and thought to myself “Wow... if I quit all those years ago because of my Tourette’s I never would have had such an awesome career.” So, I moved back in with my parents at 30 years of age and applied for ‘the dole’.

One morning at 3 am and I was wide awake, tossing and turning in bed wrestling with that horrible questions “What I am going to do with my life?” Then it dawned on me.

I need to give back. Inspire people who

are just like me and let them know they are perfect the way they are and they have the ability to write their own narrative.

Never let a simple diagnosis determine your future or your identity.

Today I travel the country speaking in schools, at conferences and to corporate teams about leadership, facing challenges and building resilience skills to push through adversity.

All because of Tourette Syndrome.

The ‘dirty word’ that came out of my psychiatrists mouth all those years ago, that changed my life. Not for the worse... but for the better.

What dirty word will change yours?



Seamus Evans
Conference Keynote Speaker Pty Ltd
www.seamusevans.com.au





What teen boys are asking me about...

I presented to teens for the first time in October 2019. I was 24, and about to graduate from university... for the second time.

When I finished high school, I was set on becoming a lawyer. I went straight from high school to Deakin University in Melbourne to complete a Bachelors of Laws/Arts. That was the first time I graduated from university. The second time was four years later after completing a Bachelor of Health Sciences (Nutrition and Dietetic Medicine).

Why the pivot?

During my time at law school, I developed a very disordered relationship with food and my body. I was struggling a lot with feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty, which led me to hyper fixate on my body and food

choices. Growing up, I was insecure about my body, but never to the point that it got to in my early twenties.

Initially I didn't see anything wrong with what I was doing. In fact, my body was being praised more than it ever had been before. Being complimented on my smaller body, however, only propelled me to engage in more extreme measures in the pursuit of thinness. I consumed hours of content on YouTube on 'how to get lean, not bulky' (yes, that's what the video was called). As the months and years went by, my frame became smaller and more fragile.

Thankfully, I did have a very supportive (and concerned) family, who encouraged me to seek support. It took a few months to get my physical health back on track, and when I did, I knew I wanted to help others in my position to do the same. I decided that I wanted to be a Clinical Nutritionist so I could support others to build a joyful relationship with food and their body. I thought, at the time, that I would do so one on one in a clinic setting.

A couple of months before my first

presentation, I was working in a local café, around the corner from my old high school. My old business management teacher came in and asked what I had been up to since I graduated. I told her and she invited me to come and present to the year nine students to tell them my story. While I wondered what a bunch of year nines could possibly get out of me sharing, I figured there was no harm in taking the opportunity.

It took me a few weeks to work out what I was going to say and how I was going to share my story. I thought it was best if I was honest and then finished with some practical strategies that they could take away with them.

I went to an all-girls school in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. I know I wasn't the only person at that school who struggled with their body image, and I naively hoped that the young people I was presenting to weren't facing the same issues. I shared my story on a Friday morning and was blown away by the response. While I was very grateful that the story resonated, I also knew that the story resonating meant that the issue of body image was still very much present. Following the



presentation, a few of the girls came up to personally thank me. I instantly thought that I needed to share the message with more people.

You're probably wondering why I shared this story of me presenting to a group of young women in a men's health magazine. It's because I was naïve about many things when I set off on my quest to help people.

First, I didn't realise how much more work I had to do on my mental health before I would actually be recovered from that time in my life. Second, I didn't know anything about running a business. Third, I thought it was mostly young women that struggled with their body image.

Before launching a business, I wanted to see if there was demand. I called mostly all girls schools to see if they would be interested in me running a presentation and workshop with their young people on body image and nutrition. After running a few sessions, I saw that there

was space for a business that offers this. I figured there was no harm in giving it a go.

Initially the plan was just to present at girls' schools. Then, the data started to emerge that body image isn't just a 'girls' issue' it is an issue for all genders. Since officially launching my business, This is Your Body, in 2020, the number of co-ed schools that are engaging me is growing dramatically. Teachers and wellbeing teams are recognising the importance of sharing the message to young men, trans folk and non-binary people too.

Let's take a step back for a moment, what is body image?

The Butterfly Foundation defines body image as: "the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs we have about our bodies and how we look, including our shape, size, weight, and the way our body functions for us."

It isn't the thoughts, feelings, attitudes,

and beliefs that others have about our bodies, it is the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs that WE HAVE about our own bodies. This means, in theory, that we have the power to shape the way we view ourselves. While I think that's true, there are a few factors to take into consideration. The biggest one is that we don't exist in silos. We don't grow up just seeing our own body, we are constantly surrounded by other bodies, which gives us something to compare ourselves to.

We live in what has now been coined, "normative discontent." This means that it is perfectly normal for us to feel bad about our bodies most of the time. Think about it, many people bond over the shared, normal discomfort with their bodies. They talk about what they 'hate', what they are currently trying to 'fix', how 'guilty' they feel about what they ate or if they didn't exercise that day. I think most of us would find it difficult to imagine what it would be like to not live in that way.



We can open the definition of 'good' by using it to describe our ability to:

- digest our food
- fight off sickness
- read and write
- play sport
- paint
- cook
- play

Making the term more inclusive of what our body can do, rather than what it looks like, is paramount to supporting young men with their body image. Focussing on

This all brings me to a conversation I had with a young man recently. He was telling me about his "body goals". He said that he wanted to get "ripped" and "bulk up". When I asked him why, he said "so I look good." Let's unpack that. If we break that phrase down, what he is essentially saying is that the body he is striving for is "good". So, what does this say about the way he feels about the body he is currently in?

Now if he had said, "I want to be strong so I can hold myself in the midfield", I'd be less concerned. There would be a physiological reason, and he would be able to measure that goal based on his performance in footy.

Unfortunately, when someone is training purely for aesthetic reasons, that is often a slippery slope. You see, many set out to achieve one aesthetic-based goal, which then spirals into another, into another. There is no such thing as a 'good' or 'perfect' body when we're talking about appearances.

aesthetic often places limitations on the foods that are eaten and encourages hyper fixation of how their body looks.

I wish I could say that my interaction with that young man was the only one I have had, but it isn't. It comes up every time I am presenting to a co-ed group or all boys.

According to the findings of the 2023 Body Kind Youth Survey, 95% of young people report some level of body image concern. When a young person struggles with their body image, it doesn't necessarily mean that they want to exist in a smaller body than the one they have. It can also be wanting to exist in a body that is bigger, more athletic, or more muscular.

In fact, 71% of young people wish they were more muscular and 78% of young people wish they were leaner. Terms like 'muscular' and 'leaner' are often used by those within the body building community. That community boasts feelings of confidence, pride, and accomplishment when they 'achieve'

the body they've been working towards. My question is, then what?

For many young men, the image of a grown man with an athletic build is what's desired. It is the image portrayed in our TV shows, movies, and on social media that represent what a man 'should' look like - 6' 5", washboard abs, huge arms, and a booty (because heaven forbid, they skip leg day).

So, what can we do to support our young men to build a more positive relationship with food and their body in a way that doesn't also diminish their desire to conform to the male beauty ideal?

1. Focus on feeling

Make sure the focus in your home/school community is on how food is going to make you FEEL rather than aesthetic. Food can make us feel any number of ways. It can make us feel energised, connected, and comforted. When we look at food through the lens of feeling, we give our young people permission to eat for reasons other than they're physical aesthetic.

2. Be open

Create a safe space in the home/school community for your young person to be able to come to you if they're feeling insecure about their appearance. They may not feel comfortable to share what they're experiencing, but reassuring them that there is always time for them, and there is no shame in opening up, is a powerful first step.

3. Start conversations with curiosity.

If your young person expresses a desire to go to the gym to 'bulk up', ask them where that desire came from and gently steer them to look at the gym as an avenue to get stronger, build bone density and support mobility.

4. Get your young person involved

Ask your young person what foods they would like to have available in the fridge and pantry. In the same way that our food preferences change, so do the preferences of our young people. The goal should always be getting 'enough' food, rather than the 'right' food. By involving them in the conversation around food, you are able to gain an understanding behind why they might choose the food they do. For example, they might express that they would prefer to have a wrap for lunch over a sandwich because it's easier to hold with one hand when he's playing soccer at lunch.

5. Increase exposure to body diversity

When we step outside of the house, we get the opportunity to see people of all different heights, ethnicities, weights, hair colours and complexions. When they open up TikTok or turn on their

favourite show, they may not get access to that kind of diversity so we need to introduce them to environments or circumstances where they might get greater exposure to people with bodies and lived experiences that they may not otherwise see. It is through doing this, that young men can see that there is more than one type of 'good' body out there, and that people are valued for far more than their appearance.

Struggling with body image is nothing for your young person to be ashamed of. It is often a by-product of the environment they are surrounded by. I mean, how comfortable in your own skin would you have been at 15 if you saw a bunch of ripped men every time you opened your phone?

If you would like further information about how to support your young person's relationship with food and their body, you can get in touch with me. I present in schools and sports clubs

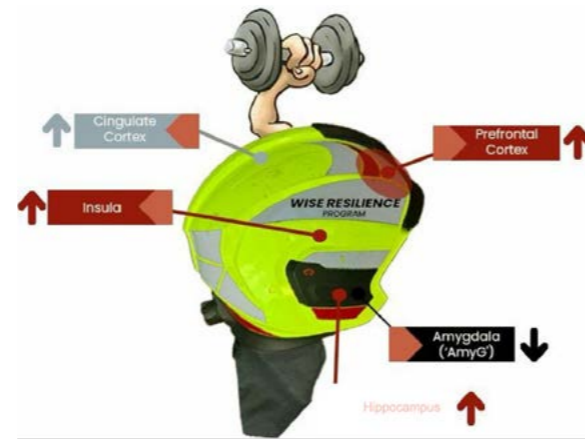
and also offer one on one support to teens and families through my 6-week Body Bop Program. My details are listed below.

For immediate support, you can contact The Butterfly Foundation on their national hotline - 1800 ED HOPE

Remember, you as a parent/carer/teacher are not alone in this. There are others that are navigating this alongside you and there is support available so that our young men can learn to appreciate and celebrate the body they're in today.

Angelica Pupillo
This Is Your Body
www.thisisyourbody.com.au





The Neuroscience of Mental Resilience. We Need More Than a Helmet to Protect the Brain.

Firefighters face an array of challenges that can adversely impact their mental wellbeing. When firefighters are required to respond to distressing and traumatic incidents, this can lead to high levels of psychological distress, stress, injury or even illness over time. Early intervention is crucial to address these challenges proactively and ensure the psychological safety of those who courageously serve on the front line.

Firefighters often prioritise physical safety with protective clothing, but protecting the brain is equally important. Just as a helmet protects our heads, mental resilience shields our minds. Mental resilience is crucial for firefighters for decision making and maintaining composure under pressure and in emergency situations. It's critical to help manage the psychological toll of their work, preventing issues such as psychological distress, anxiety, burnout, empathic distress fatigue and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Psychological resilience programs help firefighters effectively handle stress, maintain a positive outlook, and function optimally in their personal and professional lives.

Research in neuroscience reveals that

certain brain regions are pivotal in determining our resilience. One of the most promising aspects of neuroscience is the concept of neuroplasticity- the brain's ability to reorganise itself by forming new connections. It only takes eight weeks for the neural pathways to be remodelled and hard-wired, improving the way we think, feel, and respond to challenges. It makes sense to equip firefighters with neuroscience-based tools that literally change the structure and function of the brain.

The eight-week WISE Resilience program does exactly this by instilling evidence-based skills and strategies over a period of eight weeks. This leads to the cultivation of long-term habits, developing new pathways and coping mechanisms for managing stress, processing trauma and navigating mental health challenges. Our results consistently show our brains are not merely organs to be protected but are capable of considerable growth and transformation.

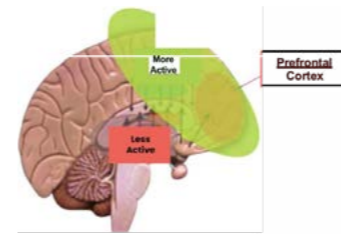
Targeting mental resilience through neuroplasticity programs is a tactical, proactive approach to mental health in the workplace. Yet, it has become increasingly evident that the right kind of prevention programs have been missing from many mental health strategies...until now. We are thrilled our initiative is pioneering significant change in the mental health prevention space.

Many describe the WISE Resilience program as 'transformative' and 'the

missing piece of the puzzle for them', highlighting the program's ability to shed light on the science behind why our brains behave the way they do that has been 'life- changing' for them. The program reportedly surpasses expectations for many, some reporting traditional mental health programs have even been 're-triggering' for them. It is pleasing to see a positive shift has taken place towards prioritising mental health prevention programs.

So why hasn't this specific kind of mental resilience training been offered within the emergency services sector previously? Simply put, times are changing, and research is evolving. Historically, emergency service personnel lacked access to the necessary education, research and evidence-based tools to safeguard their mental health. The old school mentality that you must 'harden up' and never show emotions still lingers in some organisations.

However, this outdated way of thinking puts them in the minority and hinders their recovery and progression. Professionals in high-stress jobs like firefighters, police, ambulance and military were often taught that emotional suppression, that is- inhibiting the outward signs of your inner feelings- was an effective coping strategy. Interestingly, many who mastered this skill also exhibit some of the high incidences of clinical distress, mental illness, substance abuse and PTSD. Some emergency service personnel even report pride in their ability to "turn off" their feelings, describing a sense of



numbness, emotional detachment, apathy, or being completely void of all feeling. Unfortunately, burying difficult emotions doesn't make them go away and get smaller. Emotional suppression can be detrimental to our long-term mental health.

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and stress reduction programs offer a powerful way to regulate difficult emotions in a healthy way. It takes inner strength, courage, wisdom and vulnerability to embrace uncomfortable emotions with a sense of openness, acceptance and compassion.

By adopting a non-judgmental awareness of thoughts, feelings and sensations, and learning how to regulate difficult emotions in a healthy way, firefighters can cultivate their ability and resilience to tolerate the unpleasant. Training the mind to not mind is a bold act of self-care, it is definitely not a sign of weakness.

Compelling research has shown these programs lead to structural brain changes in the top four areas associated with mental health: the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, insula and the cingulate cortex. As well as this, we see significant positive changes in the size and function of the hippocampus which is associated with memory, learning and emotional regulation. Engaging in mindfulness training and neuroplasticity techniques promote neurogenesis (the growth of new neurons) in the 'felt-sense' part of the brain, known as the insula.

This leads to enhanced self-awareness, self-reflection and compassion which is reflected in heightened activity and increased size of the insula. The insula

is crucial for insight, interoception and emotional processing, playing a vital role in awareness of internal thoughts, emotions and sensations. This strengthens our ability to feel into the body and can significantly improve our mental wellbeing.

So how exactly do we change the brain and engineer a mentally healthy, resilient mind? Attention training and mindfulness exercises in the 'mental gym' serve as a form of 'mental reps' and 'bicep curls for the brain'. By honing our ability to be present and refocusing our attention, we strengthen the prefrontal cortex- located right behind the forehead.

This area, often referred to as the 'thinking cap' is vital for higher-order processes and executive function. It helps regulate and put a lid on the lower sub-cortical limbic regions associated with stress, anxiety, fear and emotions. Individuals who engage in the WISE practices regularly have a greater capacity for focus, decision making and calmness, allowing them to respond to stressors and emergency situations more effectively. Furthermore, those with a well-developed prefrontal cortex are better able to regulate their emotions, recover quickly, and respond to stress and trauma more effectively.

As the prefrontal cortex gets stronger and thicker, the brain's 'fight, flight, freeze' alarm activator, the amygdala, shrinks and becomes less reactive. Remarkably, it takes only eight weeks for the amygdala, affectionately nicknamed 'Amy G' in our program, to reduce in size and become less reactive.

Transforming our relationship with this part of the brain is crucial, as is implementing regulatory practices that signal to Amy G that there is no imminent danger present. Trauma-sensitive practices like deep breathing, mindfulness meditation, relaxation techniques and co-regulation practices,

promote neuroplastic changes that send calming neurotransmitters to 'Amy G' to elicit the parasympathetic branch of central nervous system. The practices help reduce reactivity and grey matter in the amygdala further enhancing emotional regulation and reducing traumatic stress.

Decompression exercises and co-regulation practices help the brain reorganise and create new neural pathways for processing trauma, thereby reducing the incidence and severity of PTSD.

It's fascinating to witness the rapid changes in the brain's structure and function within just eight weeks. The results of our program are very promising- individual outcomes are remarkable, unplanned leave is on the decline, culture is improving and stigma around mental health is reducing.

By prioritising programs that promote neuroplasticity, brain growth and transformation, we can protect and prevent harm. As we strive to improve mental wellbeing, it's clear that we need more than just a metaphorical helmet to protect our brains.

Understanding the neuroscience behind resilience empowers us to deliver strategies that allow emergency service workers to face adversities with more grace and composure. Investing in the mental health and resilience of firefighters not only improves wellbeing and performance, but also ensures they can continue to protect our communities effectively.

Sally Cumming is the Director and Founder of Engage Health, a leading provider of proactive mental health and injury prevention programs for emergency services and organisations. For more information about Engage Health's WISE Resilience program please contact sally.cumming@engagehealth.com.au

Sally Cumming, Engage Health
www.engagehealth.com.au



MEET THE FRONTLINE OF MEN'S HEALTH



Most people think Movember only runs for one month a year. But, the truth is, the moustache factory shows up for men's health year-round, supporting first responders in Australia and beyond along the way.

WHAT DOES MOVEMBER DO FOR FIRIES?

Movember funds and creates mental health programs for firefighters and first responders. That includes co-designing retreats to help those living with trauma move beyond it as well as supporting families and friends of paramedics living with poor mental health.

Movember's work also involves changing how mental health is seen and supported at fire stations all over the world. We don't just go through the front door to better mental health, instead we cover it from all angles.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

Since 2003, our supporters and donors have helped us fund over 1,312 health projects aimed at mental health, suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer globally.

There've been breakthrough medicines and research. And workshops set up to support men and boys to better understand their own mental health.

Earlier this year, we invested \$100m to launch the Movember Institute of Men's Health. Its goal is to bring together the best minds in men's health to get their research out into the real world.

WHY SHOULD I TAKE PART?

Getting behind Movember means more mental health support for everyone on and adjacent to the frontline. That means more research, tools and strategies aimed at early intervention so fewer reach crisis point. Funds raised for Movember also help change attitudes around mental health. So everyone around the fire station recognises the early signs of mental health challenges, feels OK opening up about it and supporting a mate going through it.

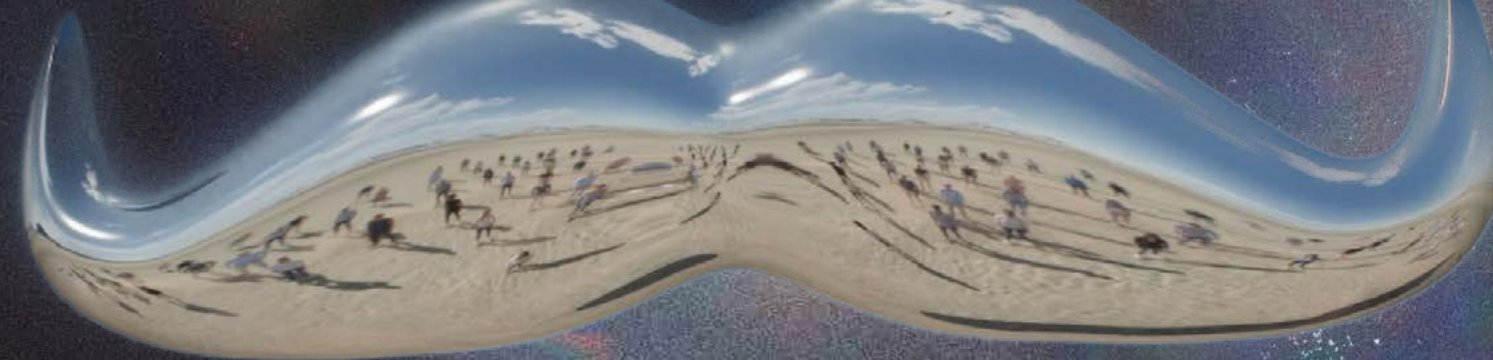
OK, HOW DO I TAKE PART?

Growing a moustache is the original Movember method. Start with a shave down then let your Mo take care of the rest.

You can also Move for Movember. That means run or walk 60km over the month. Each kilometre is for the 60 men lost to suicide globally every hour.

Hosting a Mo-ment is another option. Get your mates together for a good time. Think, fundraising night at the pub or a group ride to remember a lost mate.

Finally, you can Mo Your Own Way and do Movember on your own terms. It's literally your way or the highway. Heck, it can even be both you choose.



THE MOUSTACHE IS CALLING

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Tremors Are to Trauma as Water is to Thirst: A Breakthrough in High Performance Recovery Training



You've just wrapped up a highly charged critical incident when you feel your hands beginning to shake. What do you? You've probably learnt how to control it after all these years – after all, shaking is a sign of trauma & losing control isn't it?

It couldn't be further from the truth. That shaking is not a symptom of shock, anxiety, trauma or PTSD, but its exact opposite. It's a talk-free pathway to elite recovery & preventing the PTSD & burnout causing too many Australian firefighters to lose or leave a career that they love.

There's a revolution in the field of high performance recovery training & it's called TRE - a trauma-informed technique that deliberately harnesses the human body's innate capacity to release stress & trauma through spontaneous shaking & trembling.

"I remember having a sense of release from my chest after the first time I'd done TRE. I felt I could breathe again – like someone had taken their size 12 foot off my chest for the first time in about 8 years." British Military Veteran.

SHAKING AS A SOLUTION, NOT A SYMPTOM

As a firefighter, you've no doubt seen people shake after traumatic experiences & probably experienced it for yourself. This natural recovery reflex is generally misunderstood as a sign of weakness & shock, or even a 'symptom' of anxiety & PTSD.

These spontaneous movements are not part of the trauma response whatsoever - they are an in-built way of burning off adrenaline, down-regulating our nervous system and restoring our mind & body to a relaxed & balanced state - more efficiently than using consciously directed 'calming techniques' alone.

"After the first session I could immediately feel the difference. After 6 weeks I am sleeping better & feel like I am coming back into myself." Australian Military Veteran

TRE teaches you how to deliberately invoke this recovery response in a safe & controlled way, so you can reset your nervous system whenever & wherever you need to - on the floor of the station, under a tree during a break, or simply even lying in bed to help you get to sleep.

Once you've learnt TRE it's a powerful tool for life - something you can use on your own to 'debrief your body' after critical incidents, and for strengthening your nervous system to protect you against the cumulative effects of a high intensity career.

"I've been doing TRE for 3 months & for the first time in my life all the bad stuff & trauma that I went through has now finally left me." Retired South African Police Officer

WHY TRE WORKS: THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SHAKING

When we experience stress or trauma our nervous system mobilises energy to help us deal with the situation. Once it's over however, that energy needs to be discharged & released - if it isn't, it quickly turns into chronic muscular tension & an inability to switch off functional hypervigilance at the end of a shift.

This is where TRE comes in. Just like a dog in a thunderstorm it activates a natural shaking reflex that releases this stored energy to return our body to a relaxed & balanced state - all without having to recall your experiences or talk about the past.

NEWS AND VIEWS



"I've been using TRE 3 to 4 times per week since the training. On completing TRE, I am deeply relaxed, calm, and have the ability to focus, rest, and sleep without needing pain relief or pharmaceutical medications." Australian Military Veteran

It's the ultimate tool when you are mentally fatigued, physically exhausted & least likely to use more demanding recovery techniques such as mindfulness, breathwork or general exercise. With TRE you simply lie down, let go & allow the spontaneous movements of your body to unwind you.

"Being able to fall into the shaking calms my nervous system. Some days it was the only way I could breathe again without having a panic attack." Wife of Senior Australian Navy Sailor.

BOOSTING RECOVERY: FROM FIREFIGHTERS TO ELITE ATHLETES

Elite athletes including AFL Footballers, Olympic Medallists and Pro Surfers have been integrating this shaking reflex into their recovery routines for years. They've found it helps release muscular tension, reduce their recovery times and improve their HRV & sleep quality - crucial factors for maximising your output & staying at the top of your game.

What all Firefighters need to recognise is the first phase of burnout is not one of exhaustion & fatigue, but chronically high arousal that results in elite endurance at work, followed by an inability to switch off & fully relax at home - without requiring 3 to 4 beers, illicit drugs, compulsive gambling or sleep meds to do so.

"The potential benefits of TRE for improved performance and self-regulation of mental health are immense." Ex-Australian Military Physiotherapist

REAL RESULTS: FEEDBACK FROM THE FRONTLINES

The benefits of TRE have been experienced by Military Veterans & First Responders all around the world. It has already been introduced to Personnel in the US, Brazil, Switzerland, Norway, Austria, the Ukraine & Canada to name a few.

Research has shown TRE helps improve family relationships & quality of life, at the same time as reducing conflict, domestic violence & mental health disorders. While its ultimate value lies in preventing burnout before it occurs, US Veterans Affairs have also found TRE to be an effective approach for the treatment of PTSD.

"Of all the techniques that we introduce to US Army Soldiers as part of our resilience training programs, one of the ones they like best & keep coming back to is the tremors." Private Resilience Trainer to the US Department of Defence

When given the opportunity to experience TRE for themselves, Australian Frontline Workers consistently report the same thing - this body-based, trauma-informed recovery training is 'as or more effective' than other forms of resilience training they have done.

As one example, 100% of Frontline NSW Health Workers felt immediately more calm after TRE, with 23 out of 24 stating they were highly likely to continue using

the technique & highly recommended it for other staff in their organisation.

"Within only a few sessions TRE allowed me to get back to my old self - to feel calm & actually have my mind rest. I would consider it one of the best tools in my tool-box for my own wellbeing." Retired Canadian Fire Chief

GETTING STARTED: YOUR NEXT STEPS

Firefighting is a tough job that demands a lot from your body and your mind. If you're not using this game-changing technique in your recovery routines, then there's more you could be doing to optimise the wellbeing & performance of yourself & your team.

Elite recovery is not about talking it out or working through the details - it's about training your body to release stress & trauma so you can focus on your job & optimise your performance over a long & rewarding career.

To learn TRE via a short online course visit www.treaustralia.com or contact Physiotherapist Richmond Heath on **0409 357 964** to arrange TRE High Performance Recovery Training in your workplace.

Heart On My Sleeve

Being real about how you feel



How our charity helps people get honest with themselves and others, about their mental health.

Firefighters and other first responders carry unseen weight. They face high-pressure situations, witnessing events that would leave most people stunned, but have become “part of the job” for them. The impact can leave invisible scars, and while the physical demands of the job are obvious, the mental toll often goes unspoken. This is where our charity steps in with a mission to break the silence around mental health.

The culture among first responders can create barriers to openly discussing mental health challenges, largely due to stereotypes of bravery and resilience. Multiple studies have explored how these dynamics contribute to a reluctance to seek help, which means that problems not only remain unsolved, but they get bigger.

1. Stoicism

First responders, including firefighters are often viewed as society’s protectors—strong, fearless, and resilient. This image can make it difficult for them to acknowledge the harder parts. Studies have revealed that firefighters often feel societal and internal pressure to maintain a persona of strength, leading them to suppress emotional distress rather

than seek support. This reluctance stems from fear of being perceived as weak, which could undermine their status among peers. At Heart On My Sleeve, we want people to flip this belief system. We know that seeking help takes courage. Talking about your feelings can be terrifying to some. They’d rather withdraw or run head first into a burning building just to avoid emotional authenticity. If that’s the case, doesn’t getting honest about your mental health with the people that matter take a kind of courage that makes you the very OPPOSITE of weak?

2. Stigma

Another study found that nearly 40% of first responders surveyed felt that admitting to mental health struggles could negatively affect their careers, with many worried about being judged by colleagues, labelled as unreliable, or even unfit for duty. They believed that their organisations were not safe environments to discuss psychological issues.

Stigma like that is outdated at best and discriminatory at worst. Firefighting is tough on your body and your mind, but one type of injury is easier to see than another. A sprained ankle will sideline you for a while, but with the right rehabilitation, you’ll be back at work, maybe with some extra support, like a brace, but you’ll be ok. Mental injuries

require the same respect, rehabilitation and support as a torn ligament.

3. Symptoms

Rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression are significantly higher in first responders than in the general population. However, a large percentage of these individuals do not seek mental health treatment, again tied to the expectation of emotional resilience and the stigma around vulnerability. Fear of judgment, both from within their ranks and the public, keeps many from accessing care.

The worst part is that because individuals make every effort to mask their symptoms while they are at work, they don’t process the stress when it happens, instead “letting off steam” when they get home. This can look like self-medicating, isolating or having disproportionate emotional reactions, with family members or friends being the ones most impacted.

At HOMS, our mission is simple, to equip people with the skills and confidence to have open and honest conversations about mental health. We believe that the strength of our first responders depend as much on their mental wellbeing as on their physical health. We have a few things that might help.

MENTAL HEALTH

Apparel That Speaks Volumes

Our range of leisurewear is designed to do more than just keep you comfortable. It features our signature heart icon and charity logo, serving as a subtle but powerful conversation starter. When you wear our apparel, you're signalling that mental health matters to you, and you're inviting others to talk openly about their wellbeing.

Wearing this gear has led to conversations that otherwise might not have happened. It's not just clothing—it's a way to say, "I'm here to talk if you need to," whether it's with colleagues, friends, or even strangers.

Tattoos That Make a Statement

For those looking for something more permanent, many in our community have chosen to get our heart icon tattooed. This isn't just a piece of body art; it's a daily reminder to be honest about how you're feeling. It symbolizes strength through authenticity and invites those around you to drop the

mask and share their truth

In professions like firefighting, where close bonds are forged under intense circumstances, this tattoo can serve as a powerful symbol of vulnerability and strength. It opens up the possibility for meaningful conversations, whether it's after a tough shift or during a quiet moment with a team mate.

The Pledge: A Journey to Confidence

To help people with basic training, we've created an online pledge that unlocks a 7 day email series where you'll receive a short video lesson each day. That might be enough, but if you want to go deeper, visit the resources on our website. How you start doesn't matter, it's just important that you do.

Whether you're opening up about your own experiences or supporting someone else, this journey provides you with the tools to do it effectively.

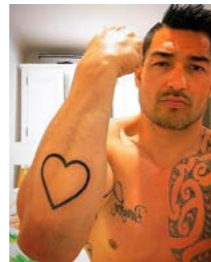
And as a reminder of your commitment, you'll receive a free wristband

inscribed with the phrase, "I pledge to be real about how I feel." This wristband is a daily prompt, not just for you but for those around you, that it's okay to be real, to talk, and to seek support when needed.

Join the Movement

Mental health challenges don't have to be faced alone. By creating safe spaces for open conversations, we can support each other, build resilience, and break the silence that often surrounds people in high-stress professions. Whether you choose to wear our apparel, take the pledge or make our heart icon a permanent part of your story, know that you're not just helping yourself—you're paving the way for others to speak up, too.

www.heartonmysleeve.org



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SA VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS MUSEUM



The first of two proposed museum buildings was opened on 16th February 2020

The SA Volunteer Fire Fighters Museum is located in a purpose-built facility on Kingston Avenue East in Naracoorte, South Australia, and hosts not only an impressive collection of historic firefighting vehicles but also machinery, equipment and miscellanea.

Our mission is to research, record, conserve and promote the history and equipment of the South Australian Volunteer Fire Service

The Museum is the culmination of decades of dedication on the parts of a dedicated group of volunteers led by Rex Hall AFSM and Russell Branson AFSM who shepherded the Museum from its initiation during a volunteer conference in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2001. In 2016 the permanent memorial to fallen fire fighters at the museums Naracoorte home was opened and the first annual memorial service held. Nineteen years after the concept of a museum was initiated in 2020, the first of two stages of the Museum was completed at the Naracoorte site with the opening of the vehicle display pavilion.

The first stage of the Museum project saw a public memorial site created to honour and remember fallen South Australian Emergency Fire Service, SA Country Fire Service and SA Forestry volunteers who have fallen in the line of duty while protecting assets in the

South Australian community. Opened in 2016, the memorial has become home to a growing annual memorial service, held each April to commemorate and recognize the fallen of the SA volunteer fire fighting community.

Stage 2 of the project culminated in the completion of a purpose built shed that houses the Museum's collection of over 25 retired fire fighting appliances from across South Australia. The collection includes a 1942 Binnum Blitz, a 1958 Gumeracha Command Car, a Burnside Pumper, an OB Flat Dodge and a 1968 Coonalpyn Tanker, just to name a few of the vehicles housed within the Museum. The site also holds countless pieces of memorabilia and photographic collections depicting historical and major events across the history of firefighting in South Australia.

Under the leadership of Rex Hall, AFSM, the Museum planning did not stop at the completion of stage 2. Rex's vision for the final stage of the Museum includes a visitor centre, conference facilities, a mini theatre, small retail outlet and museum administration facilities. This visitor centre will enable enthusiasts of historical volunteer firefighting equipment and stories to gather, celebrate and honour the history of the SA Country Fire Service and volunteer firefighters across the state. In a further nod to celebrating the history of fire fighting in SA, the front

elevation of the proposed conference centre is a replica of the original Naracoorte fire station.

Founding member and leader of the entire project, Rex Hall passed away in June 2023 without seeing his full vision come to fruition, but extremely proud of what had been achieved through his ceaseless dedication to the Museum. Rex's legacy remains in the continued achievement of the Museum's mission, in 6 books relating to the history of EFS and CFS within South Australia, and in the countless lives he touched throughout the SA CFS family.

The committee are currently seeking funding for the completion of the final stage of the museum precinct and are also planning for the 10th anniversary of the annual Memorial Service to be held in April 2025.

The Museum is currently open by appointment only, and contains ample parking with space for a coach if you are planning a big group visit.

Keep up to date with Museum developments on our Facebook page and keep an eye out for a new website coming soon.

Contact Alan Hall, Chairperson, on **0417 820 134** to arrange a visit, for more information, or just to have a chat.



general views to frontal elevation - kingston avenue



general view from static display - building # 1

Front elevations of the proposed museum conference and visitor centre



The memorial to fallen firefighters is set in a garden setting and is accessible all day every day



Binnum Blitz – Photo by Steven Schueler



OB Flat Dodge – Photo by Bill Corcoran



Burnside Pumper – Photo by Steve Schueler

The archived website is available on The Wayback Machine:
<https://web.archive.org/web/20240308091342/https://www.savffm.net.au/>



DOGS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS LTD

WHO ARE WE:

We are a frontline, mobile, additional and alternative form of mental health support for First Responders.

OUR AIM:

To help First Responders by bridging the gap between performing duties and seeking support.

OUR MISSION:

To prevent mental health deterioration, self-harm, compassion fatigue, burn out, PTSD and suicide of First Responders by using an additional and alternative form of specialised support with Therapy Dogs and experienced First Responders.

OUR PROGRESS:

After working on the concept for 5 years behind the scenes, 2023 was D41Rs pilot year. The pilot was carried out in the southern corridor of Perth Western Australia, with D41Rs first K9 Team, Karen/Hoppa, a Paramedic with over 20 years' experience, and her 4 Year old Golden Retriever Angus. Support of the pilot was received from DFES, St John WA and the South Metropolitan Health Service which allowed for engagement with front line staff.

The concept was enthusiastically received by front line staff, and success of the pilot led to Dogs For First Responders Ltd (D41R) applying for, and successfully becoming a charity.

Discussions and negotiations have been held throughout 2024 with proposals currently underway with DFES, St John WA and the South Metropolitan Health Service for the provisions of the service D41R provides heading into the future.

Dogs For First Responders Ltd (D41R) can be followed on Facebook with additional information available on its website

www.dogsforfirstresponders.com.au



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The Starlight Children's Foundation brightens the lives of seriously ill children, teenagers, and their families across Australia.

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Defining Martial Arts, is there any real benefit for everyday people?

What would I get out of doing martial arts? Is a question I hear a lot. The question is simple however the answer can be very detailed and different for many people. The most exposure people see relating to martial arts is prize fights in MMA and UFC which is a hard physical sport much like boxing that takes extreme dedication to training and the willingness to put your body on the line. Definitely not for everyone.

Another popular sports martial arts is Brazilian JiuJitsu BJJ, promoted heavily through social media and specialises in ground fighting. Other popular martial arts include kickboxing, Karate, Judo, Taekwondo and kung fu. But what does all this mean? To the uninitiated it can be daunting, especially in later adult life where you are time poor, can't afford to damage your body and nervous to start something new and unknown.

The truth is all martial arts have a large variety of benefits, they promote self-discipline, physical fitness, focus and social connections. But so, does tennis, football and other sports so why do martial arts? The biggest difference between any martial art and general sport is that it is based on an ancient

form of combat.

Developed in the days when people needed to defend themselves in day-to-day life and prior to modern weaponry and soldiers relied upon hand-to-hand skill. In modern society the need to fight to survive has diminished and generally martial arts have taken to rules and practiced as a sport. The sports side has the same benefits as any other sport but also gives you a level of physical ability to protect yourself and others if the need were to arise.

Quite often the martial arts club, style or system promotes itself on how good it is by the number of champions it has developed. The thing to remember that any sports based martial art is defined by its rules. Even in full contact MMA and UFC there are lots of techniques that are banned for the safety of the participants. Is this a bad thing you might ask? Not necessarily, it all depends on your point of view and what you want to get out of the sport.

If you are looking to better yourself and not partake in the sports aspect of martial arts but rather learn to defend yourself and others with no rules then

your quest to find a martial art that fits you will be different. Unfortunately, most clubs, styles and systems will heavily promote that they teach self defence as part of their syllabus.

To be fair most actually do but it is a very small portion of their syllabus and when training they train to the rules of the sport so your body and brain become trained to react within the confines of the systems rules rather than the efficient self-defence techniques you might have been taught.

So how do you find one that doesn't you might ask? One of the key things you need to look out for is does the club, style or system promote the number of students that have won tournaments. If it does then it is highly likely that their training regime revolves around training to a set of rules rather on your ability to defend yourself.

The aim of the club, style or system is to mould you their way and focus on how well you can copy what they do. Another key point to look for is what is the focus of the club, style or system. Does it focus on a limited type

of fighting, for example does it focus on kicking more than other techniques, ground fighting or hand only etc. This also indicates limited exposure to apply to real life scenarios.

Some clubs, styles and systems do promote self defence and do not focus on sports and rules, is this the place to be? Maybe, but have a look at the training methods. You will need to learn slowly and softly but as you progress are the techniques should be applied as close to real world as possible. For example, if someone is trying to harm you, they are not going to punch at you and leave their hand out.

They are not going to grab you and stand their while you do 10 different techniques on them. Look for a place that encourages you to mess up and learn what you can do rather on focusing on the technique they are teaching you to be perfect in the one and only scenario they are teaching from.

The system of Manakai Martial Arts based on Bujutsu. The term Bujutsu translates to "Warrior Technique". Specifically, it implies a set of physical skills used for combat and survival, (these days we refer to it as self-defence) Bujutsu is not like modern day Japanese Martial Arts that are sports orientated. There are no rules and each

person learns how best to use their ability and master their own techniques with the intent of self-defence.

Manakai Martial Arts was founded through my teachers martial arts journey in Japan, particularly at the Diatoku Ji Temple in Kyoto. There he also studied Zen Buddhism and upon his last grading for Bujutsu in the late 1980's he was also granted inka shomei (Scroll of secret transmission, (the legitimate seal of clearly furnished proof) and granted the title of Shodai Soke and combined with his completion of Zen Buddhist training he became a monk and granted with the title Shike (Zen Master) of Soto Zen.

It was then the concept of Manakai Martial Arts was realised. He took Zen philosophy and combined it with martial arts and went back to the roots of what is training. Having trained with teachers with direct lineage to Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Oda Nobunaga from the mid 1500's Training Samurai was about survival in battle so training practices were individual and taught with focus on the application of the techniques to the effectiveness for the individual rather than the way of the technique as found in more modern Japanese Martial Arts. Using this method the Manakai System effectively becomes tailored to each student regardless of their age or capability.

Progression is measured on how you adopt the tools you learn in class and how you arrange those tools in your tool box so to speak. There is no expectation that you must copy techniques the same way as you are taught by your teacher but rather how you make that technique work for you. Of course, there needs to be refinement of techniques however through that refinement the technique is mastered to the individual. "The system has you mastering your craft from the beginning".

Today Manakai Martial Arts continues to offer classes for all ages and promotes family to train together strengthening family bonds while learning how to defend themselves together. We also offer tailored self-defence courses that include: Families, Teachers, Junior and Secondary school students and First Responders.

Contact us for corporate bookings or more information on:

info@manakaimartialarts.com.au and visit us at manakaimartialarts.com.au

Soke, David Mesaros
Chief instructor Manakai Martial Arts



MESHA supports our firefighters

Military and Emergency Services Health Australia (MESHA) is dedicated to the health and wellbeing of military members, emergency service personnel and their families.

A charity of The Hospital Research Foundation Group, MESHA is focused on research, training and programs that improve the mental health and wellbeing of service members and their families.

MESHA's programs are tailor-made to address the unique needs of first responders, helping members manage mental health challenges, or even transition into a new role if needed.

What is most special too, is that their programs are delivered by lived experience facilitators, who have all undergone full training to competently deliver their wellbeing programs.

All of MESHA's peer facilitators are:

- Current or former military or emergency service personnel
- Trained in group facilitation
- Trained in trauma informed care
- Trained in establishing and maintaining boundaries
- Have undergone program specific, modularised training
- Have been a participant in the program they are delivering
- Supported by a strong clinical governance framework
- Charismatic, authentic, supportive and caring in nature
- Have the ability to understand and relate to where you have been and where you are going.

Check out MESHA's suite of wellbeing programs at www.mesha.org.au

Wellbeing for first responders through sport

Firies and their families can now access an elite sport and exercise program to aid wellbeing and recovery!

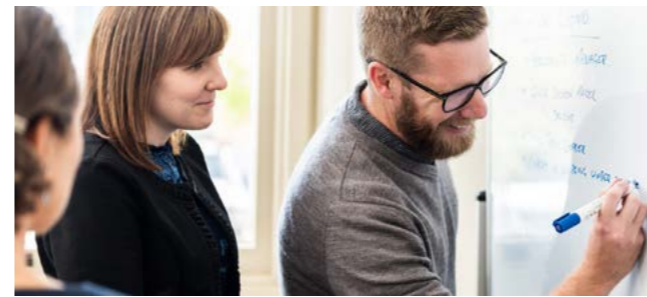
The Wellbeing for Australian Veterans and Emergency Services (WAVES) program in South Australia, funded by MESHA, was originally known as the Invictus Pathways Program and available for military members only.

It has since expanded to first responders, and this year expanded again to include family members!

WAVES offers crucial support to military members, first responders and their families who have physical, emotional and/or psychological challenges or injuries.

Delivered through the University of South Australia (UniSA), WAVES combines structured physical activity and goal setting with a comprehensive approach to recovery; while also using a unique student-delivered program incorporating sport, exercise and community adaptive sports.

This global-first program provides



participants access to a range of wellbeing activities in the community as well as allied health services, including:

- Baseline physiological testing and profiling
- A personal trainer and program
- Training in state-of-the-art facilities
- Support programs
- Expertise of UniSA's leading health professionals and students.

If you're interested in learning more about WAVES, contact invictus@unisa.edu.au

First responder cultural awareness training

MESHA offers a comprehensive, full-day training program for organisations and healthcare providers working alongside first responders.

This course aims to help employees better understand first responders, their culture values and identity to

better support them at work or in health care and other services.

This training has been co-developed through research, lived experience and industry advisors.

Corporate/Employers package

This training serves to:

- Educate employers and industry leaders about the unique perspectives and skills first responders bring to the workforce
- Foster inclusive and successful career pathways for employees from service backgrounds
- Build strong industry relationships and outcomes for first responders as employees, partners and customers.

Healthcare providers package

A lack of cultural awareness within the healthcare system can also be a significant barrier in first responders seeking help.

This training aims to:

- Improve cultural competency amongst healthcare providers to work better with emergency service personnel and their families

- Cover base training content and provide additional details on trauma-informed practice for service personnel.

For more information on this training or programs, contact MESHA via progams@mesha.org.au or (08) 7002 0880. Alternatively, visit their website www.mesha.org.au

Dyslexia in the Fire Services: Challenges and Strengths

Do you know someone who is dyslexic? Have you heard the term before?

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability/difference that can affect 1 in 10 Australians and makes up 50% of the neurodivergent population in Australia.

There is at least one dyslexic in your organisation, whether you know it or not.

Dyslexia is an information processing difficulty, and can affect a person's ability to read, the speed they can read, the fluency, and comprehension. This has a flow-on effect, and affect correct spelling, grammar, writing, and even maths. Dyslexia may also affect an individual's working memory, which means the individual with dyslexia can have trouble remembering and following verbal instructions, particularly when given in sequence, they can confuse their left and right, and may be slower at processing not only written, but verbal information. These difficulties may lead to ongoing mental health, and well-being, difficulties particularly if the individual is unsupported in the workplace.

Dyslexia is genetic so often will run in families; it is on a spectrum and varies from person to person, and although they may share common traits, all dyslexics are unique as are all individuals without dyslexia. The strength of the dyslexia in each person is determined by many factors, including their environment, and whether they had access to an early assessment of their learning differences, any ultimate teaching intervention, and their level of schooling and education.



In adulthood, those with dyslexia may have difficulty gaining, and keeping in employment, and many dyslexics stay 'under the radar' by taking jobs that are well below their level of education or their qualifications. However, it is also known that those with dyslexia work across all industries, at various levels, and including the fire services. The strengths of dyslexia are many and are discussed below.

So how would dyslexia affect someone working in the fire services? To answer that question, it is important to recognise both the potential challenges but emphasise also and the valuable strengths that they can bring to their role within the service. First though, it is important to stress the value they would bring as a team player. Being part of any team can bring out the best in the individual with dyslexia and this strength is one that underpins the very nature of fire service.

Firefighters must act quickly, think on their feet, and often follow written or verbal instructions in high-pressure situations. For a firefighter with dyslexia, there could be some hurdles in particular areas, but these can be overcome, simply by adapting some procedures and making minor changes, some of which are given below.

Difficulties then may include:

- **Reading and Processing Written Information:** Dyslexia can make

reading and processing written instructions harder, especially when performed under time constraints. Firefighters may need to quickly read maps, incident reports, or safety protocols, which could be more challenging for someone with dyslexia.

- **Technical Jargon:** Firefighters must understand and use technical terms, equipment names, and procedures. Learning and recalling specific terminology might take longer for someone with dyslexia.

- **Recording Information:** Firefighters often write incident reports or log crucial details, and dyslexia may make this task more time-consuming. Reading, comprehension, and writing down information may also pose difficulties, particularly when there is a need for a fast turnaround.

- **Pressure and Time Sensitivity:** In high-pressure environments, where speed is essential, dyslexic individuals might feel more pressure when they must process or communicate information quickly.

However, with the right tools, support, workplace awareness, and training, those with dyslexia can thrive in their work environment and bring many benefits to fire services. Many dyslexic individuals excel in areas that are invaluable for emergency response teams:

- **Problem-solving and Creativity:** People with dyslexia often excel in out-of-the-box thinking. Firefighters often face complex situations that require creative problem-solving, from rescuing people in hard-to-reach areas to dealing with unexpected hazards. Dyslexic individuals are known for seeing patterns and solutions that others might overlook, which can be an asset in fast-moving and unpredictable environments.

- **Visual and Spatial Awareness:** Many people with dyslexia have strong spatial reasoning skills. They can easily visualize spaces and objects, which is vital when navigating complex environments like burning buildings or large outdoor areas. This ability can help with understanding maps, planning escape routes, and positioning fire trucks or equipment in optimal locations.

- **Teamwork and Empathy:** Fire services rely heavily on teamwork, and people with dyslexia often develop strong interpersonal skills to compensate for difficulties with reading or writing. They may excel at verbal communication and have prominent levels of emotional intelligence. This can foster strong relationships with team members and help support morale in high-pressure situations.

- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Many dyslexic individuals have spent their lives overcoming obstacles and developing a powerful sense of perseverance. This resilience is an asset in firefighting, where conditions constantly change, and mental toughness is critical.

- **Focus on Practical Skills:** Firefighters rely more on hands-on skills than theoretical knowledge. Dyslexic individuals may find themselves well-suited to roles that require physical aptitude, quick decision-making, and practical application of knowledge—all

crucial elements in firefighting.

SUPPORTING DYSLEXIC FIREFIGHTERS

With the right support, people with dyslexia can thrive in the fire services. Some accommodations might include:

- **Instructions:** Provide key information verbally and through images and then follow this up in writing rather than in writing. This can be useful and removed the pressure they may feel under. Allow them to record information, that they can have on their phone to write up later, and allow the demonstration of practical skills when in the training phase, by the individual, using video recording to perform the desired routine or skill.

- **Technology Tools:** Utilising assistive technology such as text-to-speech software or speech recognition for reading and drafting reports.

- **Clear, Visual Communication:** Offering clear visual instructions, diagrams, or color-coded systems to reduce reliance on text-heavy information.

- **Time for Processing:** When possible, allow more time for written tasks or reading complex documents.

- **Manuals and procedures:** Offer these in different formats, such as audio/visual, on-line support, so those with dyslexia can understand content in the written information. This will reduce cognitive overwhelm and mental fatigue.

- **Work to team strengths:** All team members have strengths and areas where they are not as strong. Understanding your employees' strong points and using a strength-based approach ensures everyone is working to their full potential.

Fire services that recognise the ability

and capabilities of neurodiverse individuals and create inclusive workplace environments will benefit from the wide range of talents that dyslexic firefighters will bring to the team.

By focusing on their strengths—problem-solving, spatial awareness, teamwork, and resilience—dyslexic individuals can be invaluable assets in protecting communities and saving lives.

It is also important that when you find something that works well for those with dyslexia, SHARE IT with others. Minor changes can change procedures that are more efficient for all, whether dyslexic or otherwise.

NEED HELP NOW?

At **re:think dyslexia**, we're here to support you. Call our free and confidential helpline at 1800 13 NEAP (6327), available for young people and adults with dyslexia or other neurodivergent conditions (such as ADHD, dysgraphia, and autism), as well as employers who work with them. Together, we can help you thrive in the workplace and beyond.

Learn more about dyslexia and neurodivergence through the Dear Dyslexic Podcast Show or the **re:think dyslexia** YouTube channel. You can also explore our latest book, *Dyslexia: Insights into the Hidden Disability in and out of the Workplace*. You can order your book through the QR code.

For more details on how we can assist your fire service workforce, reach out at 1800 13 NEAP (6327) or visit rethinkdyslexia.com.au.





EMDR for First Responders



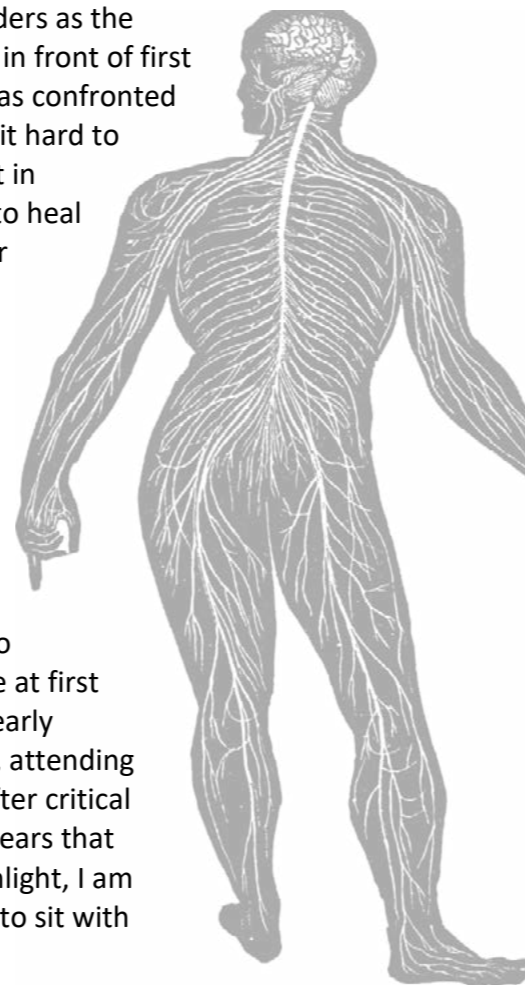
Krystal Hawkins | EMDR Consultant & Psychotherapist | Port Integrative Therapy | www.porttherapy.com.au

Trauma Therapy & First Responders

I began working with first responders in private practice almost ten years ago. The firefighters, paramedics and police that I worked with were older adults, retired, or on workers compensation, often awaiting medical discharge. The first responder clients that I worked with were often heavily medicated, had long histories of symptoms of chronic stress, anxiety, and PTSD with associated physical illnesses, such as high blood pressure, auto-immune diseases, and gastro-intestinal troubles. In addition to their internal world difficulties and physical struggles, the first responders had regularly experienced relationship breakdowns with their spouses and sometimes their children.

I spent my childhood, like most children, admiring first responders as the communities' protectors, heroes, and for their bravery. Sitting in front of first responder clients during those early private practice years, I was confronted with just how let down I felt this population had been. I found it hard to understand why this group was not the most up to date cohort in terms of understanding the nervous system, trauma and how to heal it. I had, to some extent, believed that given the nature of their work, the cumulative traumatic exposure, that these groups would have the best supply of education and assistance in relation to their mental health and wellbeing.

I also wondered where the younger first responders were, as back then they weren't the ones scheduling appointments, curious as to whether they were caught behind the barriers of stigma and shame. I set out to try to work with the first responders earlier in their careers. I joined service provider's and organisations that were passionate about and dedicated to working with first responders, for a few years I attended onsite at first responder workplaces, a few times a week to try and provide early intervention. I had the privilege of being taken on ride-a-longs, attending training, providing training, and providing early intervention after critical incidents and psychotherapy in the days, weeks, months and years that followed. Working with first responders has been a career highlight, I am grateful to those of you who have trusted me and allowed me to sit with you, listen to you and work with you whilst you heal.



Some Background

Twenty years ago, my husband and I met when he was at the Australian Defence Force Academy. We started our life together and moved around the country with our fellow defence families. My husband and our friends began to be deployed to many different regions, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, PNG, and Israel. Whether it was for war or peacekeeping there were often dangers associated with their deployments. Utilising Skype and satellite calls to communicate, I recall often hearing sirens going off in the background, then not hearing from my husband for hours, days sometimes even weeks. Regularly not knowing whether he was safe or whether he would survive his deployment. Our friends had the difficulty of moral injuries after undertaking the duties required of them abroad and returning to the morals of civilian Australian life. We saw our friends fall, some not return home, some with permanent physical disabilities from improvised explosive devices, and many struggled with PTSD in the aftermath, compounded by self-medicating, through alcohol, gambling, isolation and daily heartache.

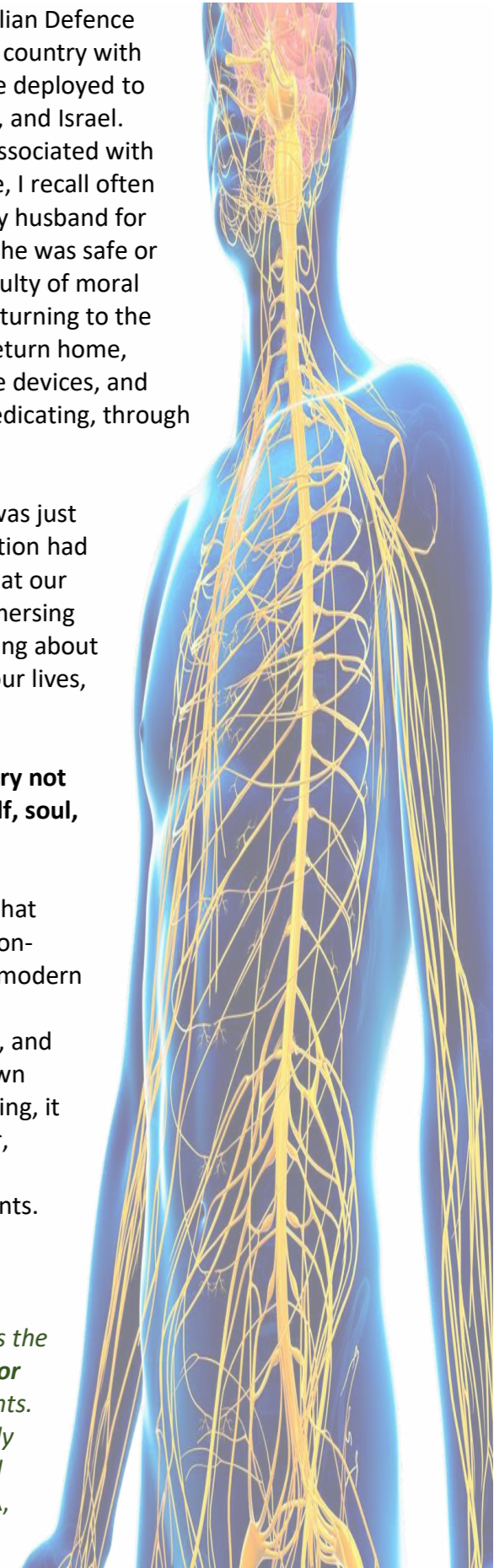
Back then, I did not have a professional understanding of trauma, I was just beginning my career, psychology and social work training and education had not thoroughly prepared me with a meaningful understanding of what our friends were experiencing. I have spent the last seventeen years immersing myself in training, gaining experience, and listening to clients', learning about their experiences to better understand trauma, how it shows up in our lives, our bodies, and how to heal from traumatic wounds.

'Trauma' comes from the Greek word for 'wound', meaning an injury not only to the body but also the psyche, the ancient concept of the self, soul, and mind.

One of the adaptations to chronic exposure to traumatic content is that stress response regions of the brain 'enlarge' to keep the organism 'on-guard', evolutionarily, this is an adaptive response. However, in our modern lives, this enlargement can lead to unhelpful experiences, such as hypervigilance, loss of sense of self, hyperarousal, chronic irritability, and regrettable behaviour. Our stress response system will not let us down when we need it, whether that be freezing, fighting, running or fainting, it will decide for us how our organism will survive this threat. However, sometimes the first responders can experience an 'overdrive' in this survival system due to the ongoing exposure to acutely stressful events.

Trauma Informed Organisations

*"A program, organisation or system that is trauma-informed realises the **widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery and recognises the signs and symptoms of trauma** in clients. Families, staff and others involved with the system responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices and **seeks to actively resist re-traumatisation.**" (SAMHSA, 2014).*





Eye Movement Desensitisation & Reprocessing EMDR Psychotherapy

‘Psychotherapy’ comes from Ancient Greek meaning the ‘healing of the psyche, spirit and breath..’

I wanted to provide the readers with some information on EMDR psychotherapy. In my experience the provision of EMDR therapy assists first responders to restore their nervous system arousal, reinstate their circadian rhythms, and alleviate intrusive images, sounds, smells, body sensations, associations and emotions as early as forty-eight hours post incident. In addition, the provision of EMDR therapy changes the architecture of the brain. Research has demonstrated that EMDR can increase the size of the hippocampus and reduce the size of the stress

response regions of the brain. Potentially reversing the effects of cumulative trauma and increasing the central nervous systems capacity to process future distressing content, building architectural resilience from the inside out. After receiving EMDR therapy, first responders can also be taught low intensity EMDR techniques for their own ongoing self-care.

What is EMDR?

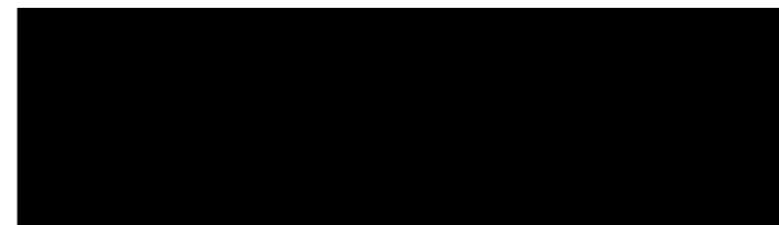
EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing. EMDR was developed in the 1980’s by psychologist, Francine Shapiro. Since that time, there has been dozens of clinical trials and it is now a recommended approach to intervention and treatment for PTSD, as well as associated symptoms and presentations – depression, anxiety etc (WHO, ISTSS, Phoenix Australia). Shapiro developed the Adaptive Information Processing model (AIP) to explain how memories are processed, integrated and how traumatic content disrupts this process.

Natural Healing System

EMDR therapy reactivates our natural healing system, to get our internal system ‘flowing’ again. Traumatic content is like the fallen log of a tree, blocking a river from easily flowing, sticks and other debris can build up behind the log increasing the pressure on the system and reducing the natural flow. EMDR therapy removes the logs from the river, so the debris and natural content can start flowing again.

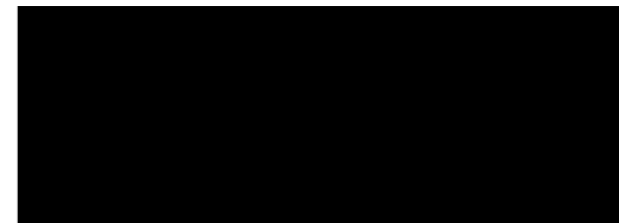
How Does it Work?

When a person is involved in a distressing event their brain may be unable to process all of the information associated with the event, like a neutral memory. The distressing memory content can become ‘stuck’ or ‘fragmented’ on a neurological level. When a person recalls aspects or fragments



related to the event, the person can re-experience what they saw, felt, smelt, heard, or thought and this can cause further distress. Sometimes these fragments of events or memories activate in the body-mind system unconsciously or with no warning, this can activate the stress response repeatedly. As a result, people might begin to avoid any reminders of the event to avoid experiencing the associated distressing features.

The alternating left-right stimulation of the brain hemispheres with eye movements, and auditory beats or taps during EMDR, stimulates the ‘stuck’ fragmented content, reactivating the Adaptive Information Processing system. In the process the memories lose their intensity, so they become less distressing and are then experienced more like ‘neutral’ memories.



During EMDR

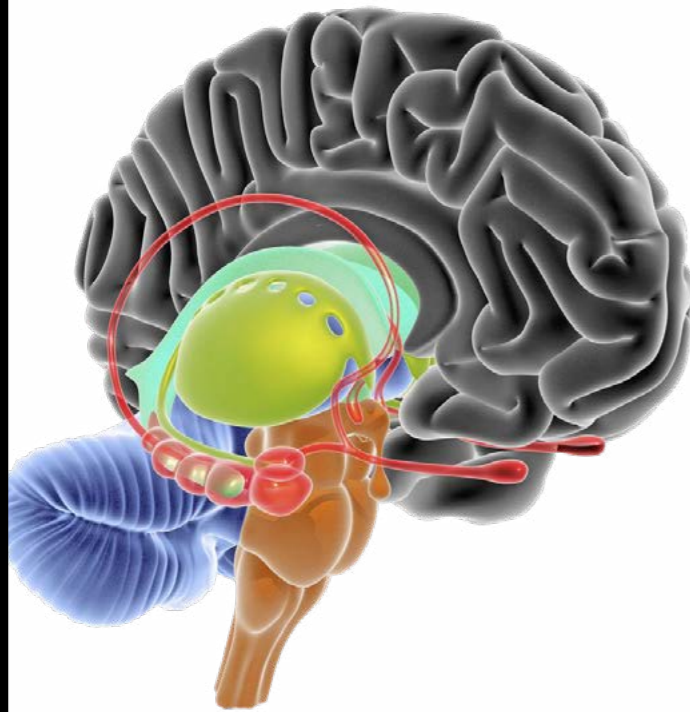
The EMDR therapist will help clients practice resourcing techniques to promote self-regulation. These techniques will help regulate the nervous system and develop strategies to manage distressing content and physiological arousal during processing. This assists the EMDR healing process, both during and post EMDR processing.

‘Processing’ involves body sensations changing, senses activating, and physiological changes such as tension in the body, images, thoughts and emotions shifting and ‘moving’ through the nervous system. Clients can notice body temperature changes, tingling, twitching, small automatic movements, yawning, coughing, burping and small tremoring. Often sensory shifts in the body will mimic experiences of the memory being worked on, so heat, smoke, and crackling sounds may arise during processing. Processing usually happens in waves, some larger than others.

EMDR Intensives

Intensives can be delivered for several hours over several consecutive days and can be a convenient alternative for people who want accelerated healing over a shorter amount of time and who do not wish to be in long term therapy.

After an initial assessment, a collaborative treatment plan will be developed with the EMDR therapist to meet clients specific intensive EMDR therapy needs. EMDR therapists often



offer flexible delivery options, including face-to-face, online or retreat style EMDR treatment, where clients can travel and stay in the EMDR therapist's local city or town, engaging in treatment over consecutive days. This can assist people who live remotely or in regions where they are unable to access treatment and would prefer face-to-face treatment.

Early Intervention EMDR

EI-EMDR attempts to consolidate memories or episodes adaptively prior to the disturbing and blocking aspects of the traumatic event laying on to older or existing trauma memory networks, where it can create or further compound existing psychopathology. When memories are laid on to trauma memory networks, somewhere between

days to months, psychopathology emerges and can compound pre-existing conditions.

Time frames for what is considered early intervention vary, Shapiro (2012) states 'the week following a trauma, a critical period, where increased stress could lead to irreversible changes in central nervous system.' When EI-EMDR is provided the stress response systems are deactivated, reactivating the natural healing and integration processes, and providing adaptive memory consolidation. Research demonstrates that EI-EMDR alleviates acute stress responses, acute stress disorder and PTSD symptoms, thus, participants who received EI-EMDR did not develop associated psychopathologies.

In addition, in the days that follow a potentially traumatic event, people often report acute stress responses such as difficulty sleeping, gastrointestinal troubles and other symptoms associated with autonomic nervous system dysregulation, further increasing the disruption to natural healing processes, increasing psychological and physical health risks.

EI-EMDR has demonstrated 'rapid treatment effects', as stated by Jarero (2013), who reports that EI-EMDR can 'prevent the development of chronic PTSD and increases psychological and emotional resilience'. Research has demonstrated that one session of EI-EMDR for first responders produced immediate significant improvement of symptoms of post-traumatic stress.



"I have come to the conclusion that human beings are born with an innate capacity to triumph over trauma. I believe not only that trauma is curable, but that the healing process can be a catalyst for profound awakening - a portal opening to emotional and genuine spiritual transformation." (Dr P. Levine)

Further Information

The EMDRAA website, is where trained and accredited therapists list their service and availability. If you are seeking EMDR you can ask a therapist that you are considering working with what their education, accreditation, training and experience is. Psychotherapists usually come from the pool of accredited mental health social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors. So long as your therapists is a member of an accrediting body, has been trained in EMDR and has kept up their professional development and supervision then you should be in good hands.

Further Resources

www.emdraa.org/emdr-resources

Expert Guidelines: Diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in emergency service workers. Black Dog Institute & UNSW.

https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2024/03/BDI_PTSD_Guidelines_A4_DIGITAL.pdf

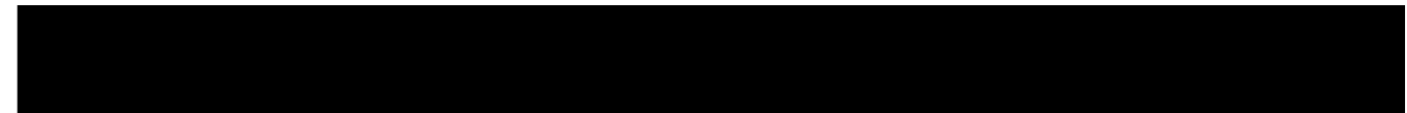
Jarero, I., et al. (2013). "EMDR Individual Protocol for Paraprofessional Use: A Randomized Controlled Trial With First Responders." Journal of EMDR practice & research.

Shapiro, E. (2012). "EMDR and early psychological intervention following trauma." European Review of Applied Psychology. Science Direct.



Krystal Hawkins runs Port Integrative Therapy, a trauma psychotherapy practice in Port Macquarie, NSW. Krystal is a Psychodynamic Psychotherapist, an Accredited Clinical and Mental Health Social Worker & an Accredited EMDR Consultant. Krystal holds a Bachelor of Social Work, Graduate Diploma in Psychology and a Masters of Science in Medicine (Trauma-informed Psychotherapy).

You can contact Krystal via email: krystal@porttherapy.com.au



SUPPORTING MENS MENTAL HEALTH

Let's normalise mental health challenges for men and reduce the stigma.

The Next Step Australia saves Men's lives by reducing the negative stigma men feel towards reaching out for help. The Next Step Australia does this by using research backed training to provide hundreds of passionate community members the skills to recognise and help anyone that might be suffering from mental health and suicidal challenges. In addition, The Next Step Australia provides engaging presentations to anyone in the community, including workplaces, schools and sporting clubs, using both our own experiences of mental health and suicidal challenges, as well as current best practice approaches, to spread our message that when we are struggling to take "the next step", getting support & assistance is paramount.

THE NEXT STEP MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH
Est. 2020



THENEXTSTEPAUSTRALIA.COM.AU

- Normalising men's mental health challenges
- Reducing stigma for men seeking support
- Suicide awareness & prevention strategies
- Professional support referral information
- Community focused evidence-based training

#whatsthenextstep




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Mens Talk

The landscape of men's mental health is undergoing a remarkable transformation with the launch of a groundbreaking Men's Mental Health Hubs at Scarborough and Busselton WA. Powered by Mens Talk a men's mental health promotion charity in collaboration with the Mental Health Commission WA. Designed to break down barriers and provide accessible mental health support for all men, this innovative hub is not just a space for resources, but a vibrant community centre offering a fresh approach to men's wellbeing.

Unlike traditional clinics, the beachside hubs provides a non-clinical, relaxed environment where men can seek support without the stigma that often surrounds mental health. Here, the focus is on creating a space that fosters connection and openness.

Whether through casual drop-in sessions, resource libraries, or engaging community workshops, the hub is designed to meet men where they are—mentally and physically. From individual mentoring to group support, the services offered empower men to take control of their mental health journey in a way that feels natural.

The beach location for these hubs provides an aqua therapy, further enhancing the positive wellbeing. Studies have shown that natural environments, especially those near water, can improve mood and reduce anxiety. By leveraging the beach location, the hubs provide an ideal setting for men to engage in mental health practices such as mindfulness, physical activities, and social connection.

Workshops cover diverse topics, including stress management, mental resilience, and physical wellbeing, all while building a sense of community. Whether it's a morning of movement and breath or an afternoon of open discussions, the Katitjin Blue Mind Places are a beacon of hope for men from all walks of life.

With this unique and accessible approach, Mens Talk is making significant strides in changing the way men view and manage their mental health and wellbeing. It's not just a place for healing; it's a space for growth, connection, and transformation.

Paul Litwin
MTalk
www.mtalk.com.au

Scarborough Hub Now Open!

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday
9AM – 4PM

Saturday
12PM – 5PM

The Esplanade,
Scarborough
Beach

Empowering Wellness and Masculinity

Katitjin Blue Mind Place is excited to announce the opening of our Scarborough Hub! This community space is dedicated to fostering wellness and healthy masculinity for all who identify as male. Join us to be part of a supportive community that promotes mental well-being and positive conversations around masculinity.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Gain access to a comprehensive range of mental health resources tailored specifically to meet your individual needs. Our team will connect you with the right professionals and support networks to ensure you receive the best care possible.

MENTORING PROGRAMS

Connect with mentors who are here to provide guidance, support, and encouragement. Our programs are designed to help you navigate life's challenges, set and achieve personal goals, and build resilience.

INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Discover a wealth of valuable information and resources designed to support your mental wellness journey.

WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

Join us for a variety of workshops and events, both in-house and through community outreach, aimed at enhancing your wellbeing.



Powered By



Government of Western Australia
Mental Health Commission

Need Professional Support?

LIFELINE WA

Crisis support & suicide prevention services.

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M: 0477 13 11 14
Crisis Chat Available 24/7

PANDA

Counselling for those experiencing difficulties during pregnancy & the first year of parenthood.

P: 1300 726 306
Available 9.00am – 7.30pm
Weekdays AEST

MENSLINE

Phone and online counselling services.

P: 1300 789 978
Online counselling
Join the forum
Available 24/7

HEADSPACE

Suicide callback service for 12 – 25 year olds

P: 1300 737 732
Web chat
Available 24/7

SUICIDE CALLBACK

Support for people at risk of suicide, those concerned for someone, and the bereaved.

P: 1300 659 467
Online counselling & Video Chat
Available 24/7

KIDS HELPLINE

Counselling support for 5 – 25 year olds.

P: 1800 551 800
Web chat
Available 24/7

1800 RESPECT

Help and support for people experiencing sexual assault, violence and abuse

P: 1800 737 732
Web chat
Available 24/7

QLIFE

Anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ support.

P: 1800 184 527
Web chat
Available 24/7

REGIONAL MEN'S HEALTH

Support for men in regional WA.

P: 9690 2277
Available Mon-Fri

VIRTUAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Support for farmers

P: 0404 032 249
Available 24/7

TIACS

A free phone and text counselling service offering mental health support to Australia's blue collar community.

P: 0488 846 988

THE BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION

Support for people with eating disorders and body image issues

P: 1800 33 4673
Available 24/7

Web Chat
Available 8.00am –
Midnight AEST

13YARN

Counselling support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

P: 13 92 76
Available 24/7



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FIRST RESPONDER VETERANS AUSTRALIA

A National Community For All First Responders

In times of crisis, first responders, comprising skilled individuals, courageously step into the chaos of emergency situations, confronting the elements of nature and interacting with people in extreme circumstances. These incidents, often involving severe injuries, and threats to life, safety, and property, demand swift and expert responses.

The term 'first responder' primarily encompasses professionals like paramedics, police officers, firefighters, and other emergency personnel trained to offer crucial assistance in time-sensitive, life-threatening situations. It extends to dedicated volunteers, emergency control centre workers, and Traffic Management Response crews.

While the term "Veteran" typically evokes images of military service, it also denotes individuals with extensive experience in specific fields, such as police veterans. This definition applies to both serving and former members, including volunteers. Our mission is to celebrate and promote this sense of pride within the First Responder community, acknowledging their invaluable service.

In Australia, there are over 400,000 emergency workers, including volunteers, who play a vital role in the community. They deal with urgent situations involving vulnerable individuals, facing heightened anxiety, shock, distress, danger, or even death. These professionals operate in conditions that pose significant risks to

their own safety.

The nature of their work exposes them to challenging conditions and frequent encounters with trauma, both directly and vicariously. Irregular shifts, long hours, fatigue, and the constant pressure to make critical decisions



further characterize their roles.

Volunteers also operate in dangerous environments regularly. Unfortunately, the recognition they deserve is often insufficient or non-existent.

First Responder Veterans Australia, established in 2020, has seen steady growth despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, boasting over 1300 members. Our objective is to unify Australia's police and emergency services members, whether full-time, retired, paid, or volunteer, creating a national community that offers support, and resources, and fosters the exchange of information, with a primary focus on recognizing the commendable work of these individuals.

We are currently initiating the First Responder Assistance and Crisis Service, a pioneering effort in Australia dedicated to providing support for first responders, their immediate families, and caregivers. Collaborating



with retreats nationwide, we actively encourage adventure training and have implemented the First Responder OverWatch program to combat the stigma of operational stress.

Our members engage in various forums and programs, offering a safe and supportive space to discuss their experiences, seek information, or share insights. First Responder Veterans Australia operates as a social enterprise, distinct from a charity, funding its activities solely through its founder and sponsorships, aiming to address specific needs beyond mental and physical health services already provided by existing organizations.

Who Are Our Members

Our members come from many services and agencies including;

- Police including (Serving or Former Members) those employed by the Police in a Protective Services or Special Constable role. This does not include privately contracted security guards even if they protect Police Assets.
- Firefighters: Full Time or Volunteer, Regional or Rural. This includes those who are employed by private companies, mining, refineries, and factories plus those employed as a firefighter with the National Parks Service.
- Nurses and Doctors who are/or have worked with 1st Responders or are Trauma and Emergency Department workers
- Paramedics Including Rural

Volunteers.

- Military Emergency Services including service police.
- SES
- Marine Rescue
- Helicopter Rescue and ASAR
- Search and Rescue, or Nationally Accredited Rescue Service.
- Triple 000, 131444, and communications Operators employed by an emergency service..

First Responder Veterans Australia's mission is to recognise First Responders as valued and essential members of the community, help recognise their service, and help those organisations who are dedicated to helping the men and women of the First Responder community. This includes those who are full time members and those who volunteer.

First responders are the backbone of our society, constantly putting their lives on the line to protect and serve our communities. It is crucial to empower these brave individuals and provide them with the support they need. By building a national community, we can unite first responders across the country, fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and ultimately enhancing their ability to save lives

First Responder Veterans Australia was established in 2018. Our aim was to build an organisation that not only supports these dedicated men and women but to recognise their service, be they paid or volunteer, serving or

retired, and to promote fellowship and a sense of community in a supportive environment. We are not a workplace advocacy, nor will it ever be.

First responders are faced with numerous challenges every day, from tackling emergencies to dealing with trauma and stress. It is essential to create an environment where they can connect with like-minded professionals and find support. By joining the movement of building a national online community for first responders, we can provide a space to share experiences, seek advice, and access resources that can enhance skills and well-being. Together, we can empower them to be able to overcome obstacles and continue their vital work.

Building an community for first responders is not just about creating a platform for communication; it is about fostering a sense of belonging and unity. First responders often face unique challenges that can be difficult for others to fully understand. By connecting with their peers from around the nation, they can find solace in knowing that they are not alone. This online community will serve as a support network, enabling them to share their struggles, triumphs, and knowledge, thus cultivating resilience within the first responder community.

In times of crisis, first responders must have access to the latest information, resources, and best practices. First Responder Veteran Australia is a

platform for sharing valuable insights and experiences. This collective knowledge will empower first responders to improve their techniques, learn from one another, and ultimately enhance their ability to keep our communities safe.

We hope to facilitate the exchange of innovative ideas, enabling first responders to adapt and evolve in the face of evolving challenges. By building resilient communities through an online platform, we are equipping our first responders with the tools they need to excel in their crucial roles. Recognition of their selfless service is also a major goal of ours including the implementation of various community awards schemes and active promotion of the work they do.

Empowering first responders on a nationwide scale is a responsibility we all share. We want to build a national online community, where we can provide support, knowledge, and resilience to those who put their lives on the line for our safety. We can build a stronger, safer future for our communities.

Membership is free and you can join us by completing an online form located at www.frva.com.au/join

We can be contacted using our online form at www.frva.com.au/contact-us If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us on **1800 455 472**.



THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF THE DOGS CONNECT PROGRAM

In an increasingly digital world, the Dogs Connect Program offers a refreshing reminder of the deep, irreplaceable bond between humans and animals. Founded by Grant Shannon, this program leverages the therapeutic power of dogs to transform educational and workplace environments, fostering emotional well-being, a sense of community, and enhanced learning.

The Dogs Connect Program's approach uniquely positions dogs as integral members of communities such as schools, hospitals, and justice centres providing essential emotional support to so many people in these settings.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The Dogs Connect Program is meticulously designed to address both the needs of students and the well-being of the dogs involved. The process starts with the careful selection of dogs—those with calm temperaments, a love for people, and the ability to adapt to various environments. Considerations

related to what we can only assume regarding shedding, personality, and history are also important. The focus is then turned to the people who will support these dogs and building their understanding of what the dogs need and how to become reliable guardians and advocates for the dogs.

The Dogs Connect philosophy supports the notion that what makes a wellbeing dog is not what the dog 'can do', rather what the people around the dog do to build understanding, predictability, safety, and authenticity within the realm of all expectations, plans, and interactions.

Once a dog is integrated into a community such as a school, they become a very regular presence, available for connection opportunities in ways that must be mutual and reciprocated by dogs and humans. The program often includes structured activities, such as reading sessions or emotional support periods, where students can spend time with the dog. These interactions are always supervised by trained staff, ensuring that both the humans and the dog remain comfortable and safe.

The calming presence of a dog in classrooms or workplace provides a powerful influence, helping people manage stress and anxiety. When students feel overwhelmed, they can spend time with the dog, who offers non-judgmental companionship. This dynamic encourages students to open up about their feelings, leading to improved emotional well-being and, consequently, better academic performance.

The program's flexibility allows it to adapt to the specific needs of each setting. In some cases, the dog might play an active role in assisting students or staff with particular needs, while in others, the dog can simply be a comforting presence in the background. The program's success lies in its ability to seamlessly integrate into the very stimulating environments, enhancing the educational and workplace experience without causing disruptions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DOG-CENTRED APPROACH

A cornerstone of the Dogs Connect Program is its unwavering commitment to a dog-centred approach. This philosophy is crucial for both

compliance with ethical standards and effective risk mitigation. By prioritising the well-being of the dogs, the program ensures that the animals are not just tools, but respected partners in the process. These dogs are viewed as individuals who are learners themselves, and indeed sentient beings who have their very own emotional experiences.

The philosophy is more about training people and educating entire communities than it is about training dogs. Dogs are regularly assessed to ensure they are comfortable and happy in their roles. This dog-centred approach minimises the risk of stress or burnout for the animals, which could otherwise lead to behavioural issues that might compromise the safety and effectiveness of the program.

Risk mitigation also extends to the interactions between students and dogs. Trained staff closely monitor these interactions, ensuring that the dogs are not overworked or placed in situations that could cause discomfort. This careful supervision reduces the risk of incidents, such as accidental harm to the dog or inappropriate behaviour from humans.

Compliance with animal welfare standards is non-negotiable in the Dogs Connect Program. By adhering to these standards, the program not only protects the dogs but also sets a positive example for all involved, teaching them about how to understand and respect animals so that they can have choice. This commitment to ethical practices strengthens the program's credibility and ensures its sustainability.

A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH

The Dogs Connect Program seamlessly aligns with trauma-informed approaches to workplace and educational mental health by prioritising safety, trust, and emotional

well-being. A trauma-informed approach recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and emphasises creating environments where individuals feel safe, supported, and empowered. The Dogs Connect Program embodies these principles by integrating dogs into school and workplace settings, where they serve as non-judgmental, calming presences that help reduce stress and anxiety.

In trauma-informed environments, it is essential to provide individuals with a sense of control and choice. The Dogs Connect Program allows participants to engage with the dogs at their own pace, fostering a sense of agency and personal empowerment. This autonomy is particularly important for individuals who have experienced trauma, as it helps rebuild trust and confidence.

Moreover, the program emphasises the importance of building strong, supportive relationships—a key component of trauma-informed care. The dogs act as catalysts for positive interactions, encouraging connection and reducing feelings of isolation. By creating a safe, welcoming environment where individuals can experience comfort and companionship, the Dogs Connect Program supports the healing process and promotes overall mental well-being, making it an invaluable tool in trauma-informed mental health strategies in both educational and workplace settings.

THE IMPACT OF THE DOGS CONNECT PROGRAM

The impact of Dogs Connect has been profound and far-reaching. In schools, where the program has been implemented, students report feeling more relaxed and focused, and the calming presence of a dog helps them manage stress and anxiety. Teachers, too, notice significant improvements in classroom dynamics, with reduced conflicts and enhanced communication

among students. The program fosters a strong sense of community, as students and staff bond with their four-legged companion, creating an environment where everyone feels supported.

The Dogs Connect Program is more than just an educational initiative—it's a transformative force that underscores the enduring power of the human-animal bond. The program's growth and success is a testament to the enduring power of the human-animal bond and the profound impact it can have on our lives.

As the program expands, it continues to demonstrate that a dog-centred approach, which prioritises the well-being of both the dogs and the humans, is key to creating a positive, impactful, and sustainable environment. In a time when the pressures on people of all ages and places are higher than ever, the Dogs Connect Program offers a beacon of hope, proving that sometimes, the simplest solutions—like the companionship of an animal such as a dog—can have the most profound effects.

Grant Shannon
Founder Dogs Connect
<https://dogsconnect.net.au>



KINGSFORD

Firefighters' Boost Comes To WA Land Development



At a time when many frontline workers are doing it extra tough, a Western Australian, family-owned land developer has found a way to offer a helping hand to those who help others daily.

Firefighters will be able to purchase land in Kingsford at Bullsbrook with developer Okeland Communities offering them a \$5,000 rebate at settlement to say, "thank you for all you do".

The initiative comes amid mounting pressure to unlock more housing supply in Western Australia.

With the availability of land in new estates at its lowest point for more than two decades, the Kingsford campaign is releasing additional options into the market and making homebuilding more accessible for a significant number of potential new homeowners.

Launching the Help for Helpers Campaign today, Okeland Communities Managing Director Adam Shephard said the idea of making it easier for some of WA's most undervalued workers to build a new home resonated strongly with the family-owned developer.

"Bullsbrook has always been a caring community where people look out for each other, and that spirit has quickly and very naturally flowed to Kingsford which makes it perfect for the Help for Helpers initiative," Mr Shephard said.

"The idea of recognising hardworking care workers also echoes Okeland's belief in celebrating authentic family values and strong, sustainable residential communities."

The Help for Helpers Campaign launch coincides with the release of the first Town Centre lots at Kingsford.

Within walking distance of the new Town Centre, these first Town Centre lots represent a more urban lifestyle with more compact lots ranging in size from 300sqm to 450sqm.

"Because of their compact size, these Town Centre lots

present a great opportunity for those wanting to get on to the property ladder, or those downsizing," Mr Shephard said.

"With the urban vibe of the Town Centre on the doorstep, but still close to nature and everything Bullsbrook and the Swan Valley has to offer, they offer the best of all worlds."

Construction of this first Town Centre stage is scheduled for completion around November and titles anticipated early in 2025.

A subsequent land release, earmarked for later this year, will include the larger- than-average lots that Kingsford has become known for, including lots of over 500sqm.

Homebuyers at Kingsford can look forward to several more development milestones over the coming 12 -18 months.

Work on the first stage of the \$18M Kingsford Town Centre is to commence soon, with completion of the 3,600sqm Woolworths supermarket, along with numerous specialty shops, BWS liquor store, and food and beverage outlets anticipated to be open in the second half of 2025.

Future stages of the town centre are likely to include a McDonald's, tavern, main street and play space.

"Having both new and established amenities on the doorstep has been a crucial part of our master-planning at Kingsford," Mr Shephard said.

"Kingsford Town Centre will be more than just the heart of Kingsford; it will be a lively, village-style focal point designed to be enjoyed by the whole of the Bullsbrook community."

For details on the Help for Helpers Campaign please visit www.kingsford.com.au/helpforhelpers or visit the Kingsford at Bullsbrook Land Sales office.

Media contact:

Alivia Nunn @ The PR Collaborative on 0435 759 050








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