



Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2016-19



Foreword

Ambulance services workers face obvious and unique mental health challenges in addition to the rewards of their line of work.

Unsurprisingly, the incidence of mental health problems amongst emergency services workers is considerably higher than in other professions.

Suicide rates at Ambulance Victoria are significantly higher than the Victorian average. They are also significantly higher than those of other emergency services providers, including fire services and Victoria Police.

For too long we have accepted that injury, including psychological injury, is part of the job for AV people. This assumption is unacceptable and cannot continue. Reform is now underway at AV.

This AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is part of our comprehensive response to the recommendations of the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee Action Plan.

This strategy has been developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders along with input and feedback from *beyondblue*.

It is fully supported by all levels of leadership and management within AV and will be implemented in partnership with our people and their families, management, executives, unions and of course, the AV Board.

Mental health and wellbeing is a vital component of our wider commitment to improving the health and safety of all people who work at AV. As such, the development and implementation of this strategy is aligned and integrated with the AV Health and Safety Strategy 2016-19.

Doing the right thing for our people's mental health also makes sense from an operational and business perspective. Reducing rates of psychological injury and helping our people to be fit for work will help reduce absenteeism, improve the capacity and safety of those working with a mental health issue and reduce workers' compensation claims.

Our world class delivery of pre-hospital care for the Victorian community has saved many lives. The actions arising from this strategy will demonstrate that we are now just as committed to saving our own.

It signals something important to all our people at AV: you are not alone.



Ken Lay APM
Chair
Ambulance Victoria



Contents

Foreword	2
CEO message	5
Our model for mental health and wellbeing	6
About this strategy	8
Our commitment	10
Strategic objectives	
1: Understand the mental health and wellbeing needs of our people	12
2: Promote mental health at all levels of AV	14
3: Deliver comprehensive mental health interventions and training throughout the employee life cycle	16
4: Strengthen our mental health and wellbeing partnerships	18
Deliverables	20
Success measures	21
Existing mental health and wellbeing programs	22

“If we don’t care for ourselves, we can’t care for others. We need to look after ourselves first.”

– Paul, MICA paramedic





The health and safety of our people is critical. At Ambulance Victoria, we are committed to improving the mental health of our people.

Whilst ambulance work is rewarding, it also comes with a range of challenges, which we are addressing as an organisation.

In line with the AV Health and Safety Strategy 2016-19, which provides a roadmap for sustainably improving the health and safety of our people, this AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy provides a three-year roadmap toward creating a mentally healthy workplace and improving the mental health of our people. This strategy will contribute to reducing our psychological injury rates and keeping our people well and at work.

This strategy has been developed through extensive research and in consultation with our people and their families, as well as beyondblue.



CEO message

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy provides a whole of organisation approach to addressing mental health issues, centred on each and every one of our people. It is designed to support you at every stage of your employment including recruitment, as your role changes within our organisation and as you transition out of Ambulance Victoria, at the end of what I hope is a rewarding career with us.

Our strategy builds on the work undertaken by our Psychological Health and Wellbeing Consultative Group which was established in 2015 to help improve the health and psychological wellbeing of our people and their families.

I have the honour of chairing this Group which is made up of union and paramedic representatives, operational and corporate AV managers and Executive and mental health professionals. The seniority and diversity of the group's representatives is unprecedented in our organisation, and indicates how serious we are about working together to address this most critical of issues.

The AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, along with the AV Health and Safety Strategy 2016-19 provide a clear roadmap for developing a mentally and physically healthy workplace.

This strategy is informed by available evidence and extensive stakeholder consultation, and will build on existing support services while also planning for future mental health initiatives. We are proud to be the first ambulance service in Australia to deliver a strategy in this form.

There is no question that we need to take action to reduce psychological injury and ensure our people are fit to work and supported to return to work. Our strategy is only the first step and we need to address the objectives presented in this document as a matter of urgency. The Psychological Health and Wellbeing Consultative Group, the Executive team and the AV Board are united in our commitment to delivering meaningful improvements in mental health and wellbeing for you and your families.

I give you my commitment that I will support this strategy by promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing at every level of the organisation and by strengthening our partnerships between mental health care professionals, unions, our leaders, individuals and their families so that you're fit and well for work and life.

Mental health and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Lives depend upon it. I commend this strategy to you and urge you to consider your role in delivering it.

Together, we will make a real difference.

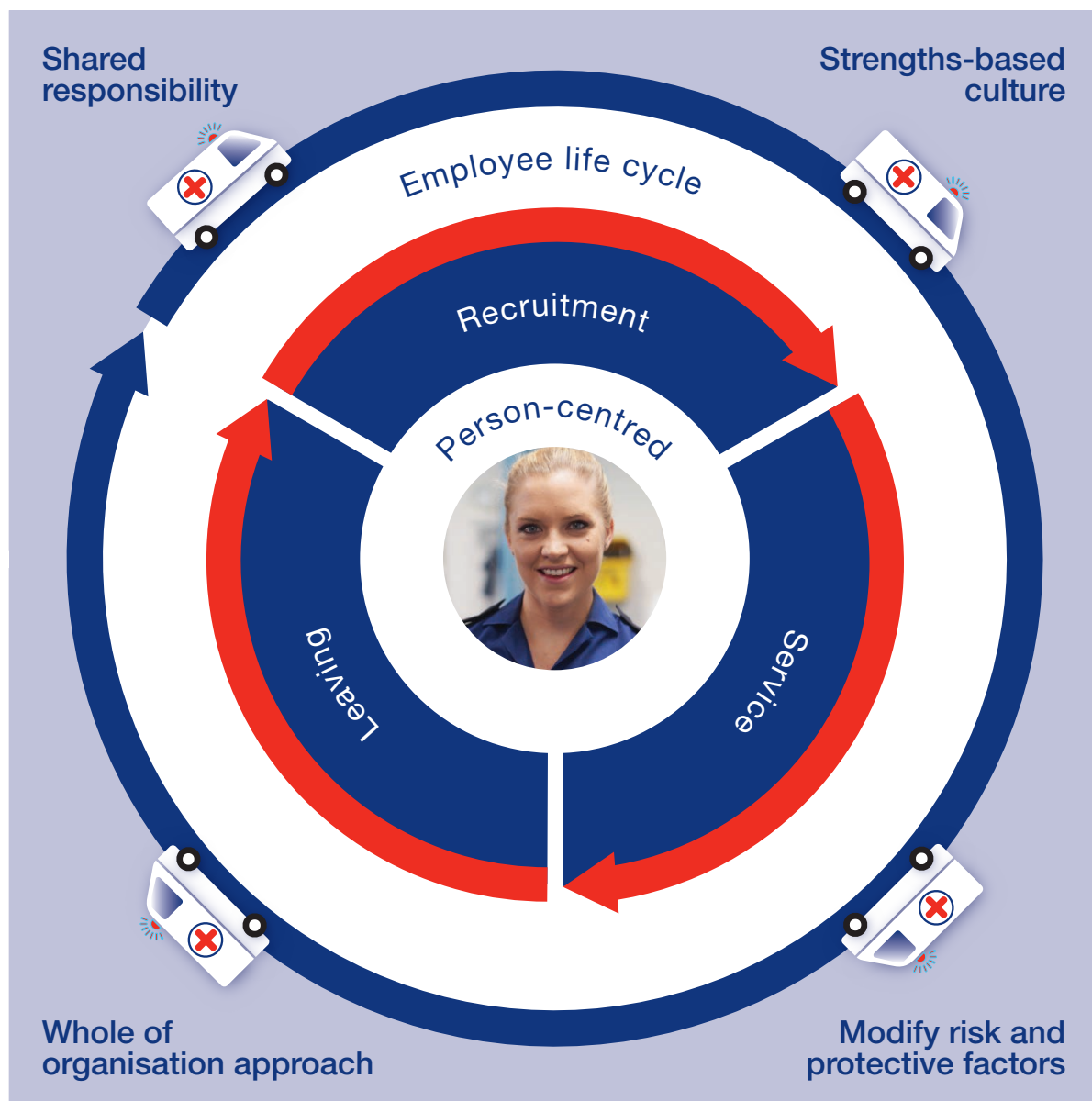


Assoc Prof Tony Walker ASM
Chief Executive Officer,
Ambulance Victoria



Our model for mental health and wellbeing

The Ambulance Victoria mental health and wellbeing model centres on supporting our people at all stages of their employment with us.





The Ambulance Victoria model provides a framework for promoting the mental health and wellbeing of our people.

Our model is based on six key principles:

1. The **person-centred** approach.
2. Mental health is a **shared responsibility**.
3. A **whole of organisation approach**.
4. Building a **strengths-based culture**.
5. Protecting mental health by **modifying risk and protective factors**.
6. The needs of an individual change throughout their **employee life cycle**.

The AV mental health and wellbeing model is based on the 'Good practice framework for mental health and wellbeing in first responder organisations' (*beyondblue*, 2015).

Our model has a strong focus on prevention and early intervention approaches to mental health and adopts the principles of the trauma-informed care framework. It is based on shared responsibility for mental health and wellbeing. We all have a role to play in promoting good mental health at AV – our people and their families, work colleagues, health care providers, unions, AV management and executives, the AV Board and the Victorian Government.

1. Person-centred

At the heart of our model is each of our people. As such, our model focuses on the individual employee's needs and our approach is one of consultation with, and participation by our people.

The model recognises that good mental health and recovery mean different things to different people, and illustrates how

our mental health and wellbeing initiatives will support the changing needs of each individual, at every stage of their career at AV.

2. Shared responsibility

Our model emphasises our shared responsibility for the mental health and wellbeing of everyone in our organisation.

This includes each individual taking responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.

3. Whole of organisation approach

We take a whole of service approach to mental health, with every layer of the service including the AV Board, Executive, managers and individuals as well as key external partners playing a role in fostering a mentally healthy workplace.

4. Strengths-based culture

We promote mental health and wellbeing by developing the positive aspects of work as well as workers' strengths and capabilities as part of a strengths-based culture.

We intervene to address mental health issues among our people, regardless of whether the workplace was a contributing factor.

5. Modifying risks and protective factors

We work to protect mental health by reducing work-related risk factors for mental health conditions and increasing protective factors.

To support this, we seek to understand our people and their needs, and how workplace factors impact on people's mental health, and identify strategies to best support us all to stay mentally healthy.

6. Employee life cycle

We recognise that our people's mental health needs evolve through the course of a career.

Policies, procedures and practices related to internal and external recruitment, service and return to work, and retirement all play a key role.

- ▶ **Recruitment** – when an employee enters our workforce or commences a new role.
- ▶ **Service** – an employee/first responder's active engagement in duties within their working life. This period may involve exposure to critical incidents and the need for support to return to work.
- ▶ **Leaving** – when an employee transitions out of their current role to another role at AV, to another employer or to retirement.

Ambulance Victoria will provide mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention training in an effort to reduce the rates of mental illness and suicide among our people.



About this strategy

Delivering a high quality ambulance service is dependent on the skills and dedication of our people and Ambulance Victoria is committed to supporting the mental and physical health of our people at all stages of their employee life cycle.

The AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a key step in building a mentally healthy workplace. It sets the framework for our three-year plan to support the mental health and wellbeing of our people and their families, and reduce psychological injury.

This strategy aligns and integrates with the AV Health and Safety Strategy 2016-19, launched in May 2016, to improve the physical and mental health of our people. Both strategies deliver on objectives in the AV Corporate Plan January 2016 – June 2017, which sets out the actions we are taking in response to Victoria's Ambulance Action Plan.

According to Instinct and Reason's "Employer of Choice" study, as well as being the right thing to do for our people, investing in mental health makes good business and operational sense. Workplaces with a positive approach to mental health and wellbeing have increased productivity, improved worker engagement and are better able to recruit and retain talented people. Investing in mental health also saves lives.

The AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is based on comprehensive research, including the application of the 'Good practice framework for mental health and wellbeing in first responder organisations' (*beyondblue*, 2015).

Input and feedback from *beyondblue* has informed this strategy.

It is further informed by extensive consultation with stakeholders including our operational and corporate staff, unions, the Psychological Health and Wellbeing Consultative Group, OHS Committee, the People and Culture Committee and the AV Board of Directors.

In an effort to better understand the mental health needs of our people, focus groups and additional consultation sessions were conducted earlier this year with operational and corporate staff from metropolitan and regional areas, first responders, management as well as the families of our people.

The feedback and opinions gathered from these sessions have directly influenced this strategy and several of the suggestions made at these sessions have already been actioned.

Implementation of the AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be driven by the AV Executive team and the AV Board and will include a program of regular reporting.

All our stakeholders have a role in the successful delivery of our strategy.





Protecting the mental health of our people

We need to better understand how workplace factors impact the mental health of our people so that we can strengthen protective factors and minimise risks to keep our people safe and well at work.

Working within an ambulance service brings numerous rewards including community appreciation, ongoing professional development, the opportunity for corporate staff to support service delivery to the community, camaraderie between staff and most importantly, the opportunity to make a meaningful difference to the lives of others.

However, there are also numerous job-specific and organisational challenges that have been reported to have a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our people.

What we know

- ▶ Higher levels of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), stress and fatigue have been reported by people who work in emergency services.
- ▶ A National Coronial Information System (NCIS) report published in June 2015 indicated that the suicide rate among paramedics is four times higher than the Victorian average and three times higher than other emergency services personnel such as police and fire services.
- ▶ Some research indicates that paramedics tend to experience higher rates of PTSD than fire-fighters.
- ▶ Paramedics tend to experience higher levels of organisational stress in comparison to those in other occupations according to some research. This may

include risk factors such as:

- Shift-work.
- Long working hours.
- Repeated exposure to death, violence and trauma.
- Difficult interactions with members of the public.
- High levels of responsibility.
- Lack of rostering flexibility.
- Frequent shift extensions.

- ▶ Our corporate people report higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress than our operational people. While corporate employees are typically not directly involved in critical incidents, their role may see them exposed to second-hand accounts of potentially traumatic events which can leave them vulnerable to secondary traumatisation.
- ▶ Mental health related WorkCover claims at AV make up 8% of all claim types yet account for 24% of total claim costs.
- ▶ A quarter of our people with a psychological claim are away from work for 80 days or more, which is higher than manual handling claims, where a quarter of people will be away for six days or more.
- ▶ One of the biggest challenges to our success will be reducing stigma and building help-seeking behaviours among our people.

* Includes extracts from the AV Health and Safety Strategy 2016-19

What we need to understand better

- ▶ The mental health status of our people and the drivers of poor mental health.
- ▶ How mental health risks change at different stages of employment at AV.
- ▶ The specific needs of paramedics, corporate staff and volunteers in metropolitan and rural areas.
- ▶ How to support the families of our people.
- ▶ How to support our psychological support staff.



Our Commitment

Ambulance Victoria will improve the mental health and wellbeing of our people by:

- ▶ Promoting good mental health and wellbeing through supportive leadership at all levels.
- ▶ Reducing stigma and isolation so that people feel safe to speak up and seek help.
- ▶ Preparing our people to meet the unique occupational mental health risks they may face at AV and supporting them to maintain their own mental health through the different stages of their career with AV.
- ▶ Developing a culture that supports our people to recognise mental health issues in themselves and others and seek help early.
- ▶ Making evidence-based treatment and recovery programs available and encouraging their use.
- ▶ Reducing suicide rates at AV.
- ▶ Strengthening partnerships between our people, families, leaders, unions and health providers to reduce stigma and increase understanding of mental health support pathways.
- ▶ Undertaking research that improves our understanding of mental health and wellbeing at AV.

Ambulance Victoria cannot accept that injury, including psychological injury, is part of the job. Delivery of our services to the community should not come at a cost to our people's health, wellbeing or lives.

We must act to reduce the suicide rate among paramedics, which has been reported to be four times higher than the Victorian average and three times higher than other emergency services personnel such as police and fire services.

Our people say:

"Whether we are in an operational or corporate role, all of us at AV need to support, understand and offer empathy to each other regarding our mental health. We all have a part to play in looking after ourselves and each other, across all areas of AV."

– Andrea, Non-Emergency Patient Transport

"In the past we were expected to be tough, suck it up and cope. It's good to have permission to openly talk about mental health and these issues."

– Paul, MICA paramedic



Strategic Objective 1:

Understand the mental health and wellbeing needs of our people

Why it's important

To provide effective support, we need to better understand the mental health needs of our people.

Mental health needs vary at different stages of employment and in different workplace environments.

Ambulance Victoria has about 4,525 staff including about 390 corporate staff and more than 3,775 frontline paramedics and ambulance community officers. There are also more than 400 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers who provide an emergency response and support in rural areas.

Our efforts to support our people must be tailored to address their changing requirements through recruitment, operational service (including transition to new roles within AV), and as they exit the service.

Preliminary data (AV's SMART program 2007-12) indicates the psychological profile of operational staff presents a mostly positive picture. Corporate staff reported higher levels of psychological difficulty during the same period. Research indicates families of ambulance services personnel can also be impacted by their loved one's role.

We also need to better understand the effectiveness of mental health initiatives delivered to support our people, so we can learn from our experiences to continually improve outcomes for our people and the communities we serve.

What we are doing

We partnered with Phoenix Australia and Black Dog Institute in 2016 to undertake an external review to identify the best practice organisational wellbeing strategies that have proven success in an emergency services environment.

To understand the mental health and wellbeing needs of our people we will implement more targeted, frequent and useful research, with collection and analysis of data to determine:

- ▶ How mental health is impacted through the different stages of the employee's life cycle.
- ▶ The unique workplace factors that lead to higher suicide rates at AV compared with other emergency service providers.
- ▶ The mental health needs of all our staff.
- ▶ Why our corporate staff appear to experience higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress than our operational people.
- ▶ The impact of mental health issues in our people on their family and social supports.

What success looks like

By working together, our people will be better prepared, protected and supported to maintain good mental health and wellbeing throughout their career at AV. They will have greater personal mental health skills and knowledge and will thrive in our strengths-based culture.

In a workplace environment where maintaining good mental health and wellbeing is valued and practised at all levels of the organisation, the stigma of mental health issues will abate and more AV people will seek help as they need it.

Our knowledge base will improve through research and more reliable reporting and through more regular reviews of the mental health and wellbeing of our people.

We will gain a deeper understanding of mental health impacts and issues outside the workplace through better communication and collaboration with families, colleagues, managers and social support networks.

Our mental health and wellbeing initiatives will focus on the areas of most need, as identified through research and reporting. The value of our programs will be assessed, enabling us to continually refine and improve them.



Key facts

- ▶ Mental health risks change at different stages of employment at AV
- ▶ We need better knowledge of the mental health status of our people
- ▶ The drivers of mental health need to be fully understood
- ▶ We need to better assess and review the value of our mental health initiatives

Our goals

- ▶ We have an accurate picture of the mental health status of our people
- ▶ We understand what contributes to good mental health in our people
- ▶ We deliver high value, effective mental health initiatives for our people
- ▶ Discussion of mental health issues is encouraged and supported



Strategic Objective 2:

Promote mental health at all levels of Ambulance Victoria

Why it's important

A workplace culture that encourages open conversations about mental health is a significant contributor to reducing stigma.

One of the biggest challenges to our success will be reducing stigma and building help-seeking behaviours among our people.

People from traditionally masculine cultures are known to seek help for mental health issues at low levels. This may be linked to more negative long-term mental health outcomes, including suicide.

The case for improving mental health and wellbeing for our people is compelling. We have an opportunity to improve mental health outcomes for all our people and their families, and save lives.

The business benefits for improving workplace mental health and wellbeing are also clear. Benefits include improved productivity and health promotion, a reduction in staff turnover, less unplanned leave, improved capability, minimised workplace risks and fewer compensation claims.

What we are doing

- ▶ Demonstrating a whole of organisation commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of our workforce through investing in the development and delivery of the AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy that will be the blueprint to guide mental health reforms.
- ▶ Educating our workforce on the importance of supporting and maintaining good mental health across all areas of the organisation and through every stage of the employee life cycle.
- ▶ Educating our workforce to address and break down the stigma attached to mental health conditions so they are able to have the conversations about mental health; acknowledging their role in not only their own mental health, but those of their colleagues and social supports.
- ▶ Developing new ways of engaging with the families of our people.

What success looks like

Our people will operate in a positive and mentally healthy work environment. They will be well informed about the mental health risks at various stages of their employment and will more readily discuss mental health issues with their colleagues, managers and families.

Supervisors and managers at all levels will be accountable for maintaining a mentally healthy workplace and will have an open and understanding attitude to what our people say about the pressures of their work or other problems.

We will work with unions, mental health care experts and social support networks to build a common understanding of the human and operational benefits of good mental health and wellbeing and will drive a united effort to attain it.

Our people's families will be more aware of the warning signs of mental health issues and will feel capable and encouraged to engage with their loved one, and with us to seek and offer support.

We have strengthened our organisation by providing our people with skills to help them have difficult conversations. We are working to address workplace stressors that may contribute to mental health issues such as job design, rostering, and part time work options.

We speak openly and positively about mental health so that people can ask for help without fear or discrimination.



Key facts

- ▶ Failure to seek help for mental health issues can lead to long-term negative mental health outcomes, including suicide
- ▶ The leadership team at AV is committed to driving change to promote mental health and wellbeing at all levels of the organisation
- ▶ A united coordinated response must be supported by everyone
- ▶ Fostering a mentally healthy work environment makes good business sense

Our goals

- ▶ Everyone is accountable for maintaining a mentally healthy workplace
- ▶ Families and support networks of our people are engaging with us throughout the employee lifecycle to address mental health-related issues
- ▶ Workplace risk factors are reduced and we develop our people's strengths and capabilities
- ▶ Reducing stigma helps create a culture where people feel safe to speak up early if they are struggling



Strategic Objective 3:

Deliver comprehensive mental health interventions and training throughout the employee life cycle

Why it's important

Mental health requirements may change for an individual according to the role they are undertaking and their previous experiences.

To increase capability and resilience, and reduce the potential impacts of mental health issues at AV, programs and resources must be tailored to consider mental health during recruitment, service and transition phases of AV careers.

Providing early intervention mental health initiatives to support our people at different stages of their career at AV will minimise the impacts of poor mental health on them personally and on their contribution to the organisation.

Providing clear pathways to help is fundamental to supporting our people and for creating a mentally healthy workplace that keeps people well.

What we are doing

- ▶ In 2016, we partnered with *beyondblue* to develop and deliver organisation-wide mental health training for our people, which includes suicide prevention. This \$1.2 million initiative is supported by funding from the Victorian Government.
- ▶ We will utilise the recommendations from our external review (see Strategic Objective 1) to identify ways to improve our current suite of AV wellbeing services to drive improved mental health outcomes for all our people through every stage of their employee life cycle.

What success looks like

Our people have the capability to maintain their own mental health and wellbeing, with access to comprehensive mental health support at all stages of employment. This starts with all potential candidates being screened and assessed to ensure their suitability for the role.

New recruits will receive mental health awareness training including resilience and self-care, information about stress management, coping skills, recognising warning signs, suicide awareness, the benefits of seeking help early and details of the available mental health supports at AV.

While in service, our people will be aware of an ever-improving range of mental health programs and supports that are available to them and their families. They will feel encouraged to access these programs and supports to build their personal resilience. They will be supported through stressful work situations and mental health issues, including support through the transition to new roles within AV and as they leave the service or retire.

Increased understanding of mental health throughout the organisation will foster a cultural change that reduces the stigma associated with mental health issues and encourages early intervention.

Suicide prevention is our highest priority

We are taking action to prevent suicide by:

- ▶ Promoting good mental health and wellbeing for each of our people.
- ▶ Reducing workplace risks and strengthening protective factors.
- ▶ Addressing stigma and promoting early help-seeking.
- ▶ Improving the mental health skills and capability of our people so they can recognise the warning signs of suicide and take action.
- ▶ Restricting access to means by improving medication management practices.
- ▶ Creating a culture where it is safe to talk about suicide.
- ▶ Encouraging and supporting the sharing of personal stories.
- ▶ Learning from other like organisations such as the Australian Defence Force. The ADF has successfully implemented suicide prevention strategies.

Key facts

- ▶ Better understanding of mental health and access to appropriate information and programs can prepare and protect our people for the challenges they will encounter
- ▶ We must build mental health programs and resources based on prevention and early intervention for the recruitment, service and retirement stages of AV careers
- ▶ Increased understanding and discussion will directly contribute to addressing the stigma around mental health

Our goals

- ▶ All potential candidates for roles at AV are psychologically screened to assess suitability for the role
- ▶ All AV people receive mental health awareness training and are equipped with skills to look after themselves and each other
- ▶ Mental health resources, prevention and early intervention services are available to support our people and their families
- ▶ Evidence-based mental health initiatives are implemented to prepare, protect and support our people at all stages of employment



Strategic Objective 4:

Strengthen our mental health and wellbeing partnerships

Why it's important

The Ambulance Victoria Board and Executive leadership team understand that working collaboratively across the organisation and with our mental health and wellbeing partners will enable us to leverage the expertise and resources of others to implement this strategy efficiently and effectively. As this is the first mental health and wellbeing strategy of its kind for ambulance services in Australia, we will explore the potential to share our framework and programs with our counterparts in other states, so that we might collaborate to deliver common resources.

We can learn from the experiences and initiatives of other emergency services organisations, such as the Australian Defence Force, whose internal campaign to address stigma "*Some of the toughest battles are faced within*", resulted in very positive outcomes for their members.

Resources developed by organisations such as *beyondblue* can provide practical information and advice for addressing mental health issues in first responder organisations.

What we are doing

- ▶ We have taken some important first steps in strengthening health and wellbeing partnerships over the past year to drive positive mental health and wellbeing reforms.
- ▶ Our Psychological Health and Wellbeing Consultative Group will oversee and recommend initiatives and promote improved communication and collaboration.
- ▶ We recognise the need to strengthen our partnerships with the families and social support networks of our people and better define the roles stakeholders should play in supporting and enabling the mental health and wellbeing of our people.
- ▶ We will explore opportunities for direct funding support for the implementation of this strategy, including strategic alliances with other emergency services organisations that face similar challenges.

What success looks like

We have strong partnerships with mental health organisations and experts to deliver best practice mental health support to our people.

We work collaboratively across the organisation and invest our resources and funding efficiently and to maximum effect.

Our stakeholders have successfully advocated for adequate funding and resources to implement the AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Our leadership, managers, unions, people and their families understand and fulfil their respective roles in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of everyone at AV.

Partnerships to assist the implementation of the AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy have resulted in increased awareness and skills to manage mental health and reduced depression, anxiety, stress and suicide among our people.

We are engaging effectively with our people's families.



Key facts

- ▶ Fostering mental health partnerships will enable us to maximise the resources needed for implementation of the AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- ▶ AV can leverage the expertise and resources of others, and also offer our knowledge and support to other emergency services organisations
- ▶ A collaborative approach in our organisation and with our external partners and people's families will help us better protect our people and prevent suicide

Our goals

- ▶ Investment in mental health and suicide prevention is appropriate to reduce the rates of mental health issues and suicide. This has not only improved the mental health and wellbeing of our people, but has also reduced business costs
- ▶ We have strengthened partnerships with mental health organisations and experts to deliver best practice mental health support to our people
- ▶ Mental health, capability and job satisfaction levels of our people have increased



Deliverables

Year 1 (2016-17)

- ▶ Develop the AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- ▶ Commence organisation-wide mental health awareness training, including suicide prevention training.
- ▶ Undertake review of mental health services with an independent expert mental health provider.
- ▶ Undertake a Psychosocial Wellbeing Survey to establish prevalence rates and gain understanding of the mental health of our people.
- ▶ Implement psychological screening of recruits.
- ▶ Enhance and implement medication management policy and procedure to address access to drugs.
- ▶ Review job design and continue actions to improve work-life balance (for example flexible working conditions, fatigue reduction).
- ▶ Implement 40 hours per annum training for our people including:
 - Safety leadership training for managers.
 - Training to address occupational violence.
- ▶ Address manual handling issues linked to high comorbid mental health problems.
- ▶ Develop and implement an alcohol and other drugs policy and procedure.
- ▶ Implement strategies to build a stronger culture of support for mental health and wellbeing.
- ▶ Implement workplace behaviour strategies to reduce bullying, incorporating the recommendations of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office.

Years 2 and 3 (informed by the outcomes of Year 1)

- ▶ Review progress against the AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- ▶ Continue mental health and wellbeing training programs including:
 - Organisation-wide mental health awareness training, including suicide prevention training.
 - Mental health training for managers.
- ▶ Develop a family engagement plan.
- ▶ Implement the AV SMART program review outcomes.
- ▶ Introduce online annual psychological screening for all our people.
- ▶ Incorporate outcomes of the service review into the strategy.
- ▶ Undertake biannual Psychosocial Wellbeing Surveys of our people and compare outcomes.
- ▶ Develop and implement new recruitment process for promotion and transfer.
- ▶ Develop and implement family violence policies and initiatives.
- ▶ Incorporate mental health and wellbeing education into graduate program.



Measures of success

The success of this AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be evaluated via a number of measures. The outcomes will contribute to delivering the key performance indicators of the wider AV Health and Safety

Strategy 2016-19. We are working with expert mental health organisations to mature our approach to measurement and develop meaningful key performance indicators based on the data included below.

Objective	Data
Understand the mental health and wellbeing needs of our people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ AV Psychosocial Wellbeing Survey – baseline conducted Sept-Oct 2016 and every two years thereafter. ▶ Review by Phoenix Australia of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the impact workplace factors have on our people's mental health – AV's existing mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
Promote mental health at all levels of Ambulance Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ People Matters Survey. ▶ Psychology and Support Service (PSS) annual utilisation report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase in utilisation of all support services. ▶ PSS client feedback surveys.
Deliver comprehensive mental health interventions and training throughout the employee life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mental Health Matters @ AV Evaluation Report by <i>beyondblue</i>. ▶ Monitor and review Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Safety leadership – Reduction in hours lost to injury – Reduction in psychological injury claims. ▶ Reduction in sick leave. ▶ Reduction in the incidence of bullying and harassment.
Strengthen our mental health and wellbeing partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Partner with expert external mental health providers including <i>beyondblue</i>, Phoenix Australia, and Black Dog Institute. ▶ Partner with the Council of Ambulance Authorities (CAA). ▶ Conduct bimonthly Psychological Health and Wellbeing Consultative group meetings.

Following implementation of the organisation-wide mental health awareness training from June 2016 to June 2017, it is anticipated AV will see an increase in WorkCover claims, prevalence rates and increased use of services due to greater levels of awareness among staff and improved help seeking. However, the long-term trajectory and outcomes are expected to show a reduction in claims and prevalence rates, and most importantly, a positive impact on suicide rates.



Existing programs

This AV Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy provides a three year framework that builds upon the following existing services.

24 hour telephone counselling and crisis support service

Our people and their immediate family members have available to them a dedicated, confidential and free 24 hour telephone support line, which includes access to peer support, psychological and chaplaincy services.

The psychological support component of this service provides 24/7 telephone counselling and crisis support, as well as consultation and advice for managers on matters relating to managing mental health issues in the workplace or other psychological health matters.

Chaplaincy Program

AV Chaplains offer a range of pastoral and support discussions, in addition to providing such services as may be needed to support the spiritual needs of our people and their families.

Confidential and free counselling

The Victorian Ambulance Counselling Unit (VACU) provides our people and their immediate family members with free and confidential counselling services with approved, registered psychologists.

e-Learning packages

We provide a range of online training packages to our people, including:

- ▶ Online Health, Safety and Wellbeing induction package for all new employees.
- ▶ Occupational Violence Education.
- ▶ Fatigue, You and Your Family Online Learning Program.
- ▶ Leadership essentials, effective team communication, and emotional intelligence.

Face-to-face Workshops

We offer regular workshops for staff on a range of topics including:

- ▶ Courageous Conversations.
- ▶ Team Effectiveness.
- ▶ Communicating as a Leader.

Peer Support Program

Peer Support officers are volunteers who have received training in assisting other staff in coping with work-related or personal issues.

The Peer Support network provides proactive and reactive peer support to our people at key times such as following their involvement in critical incidents or other potentially traumatic events.

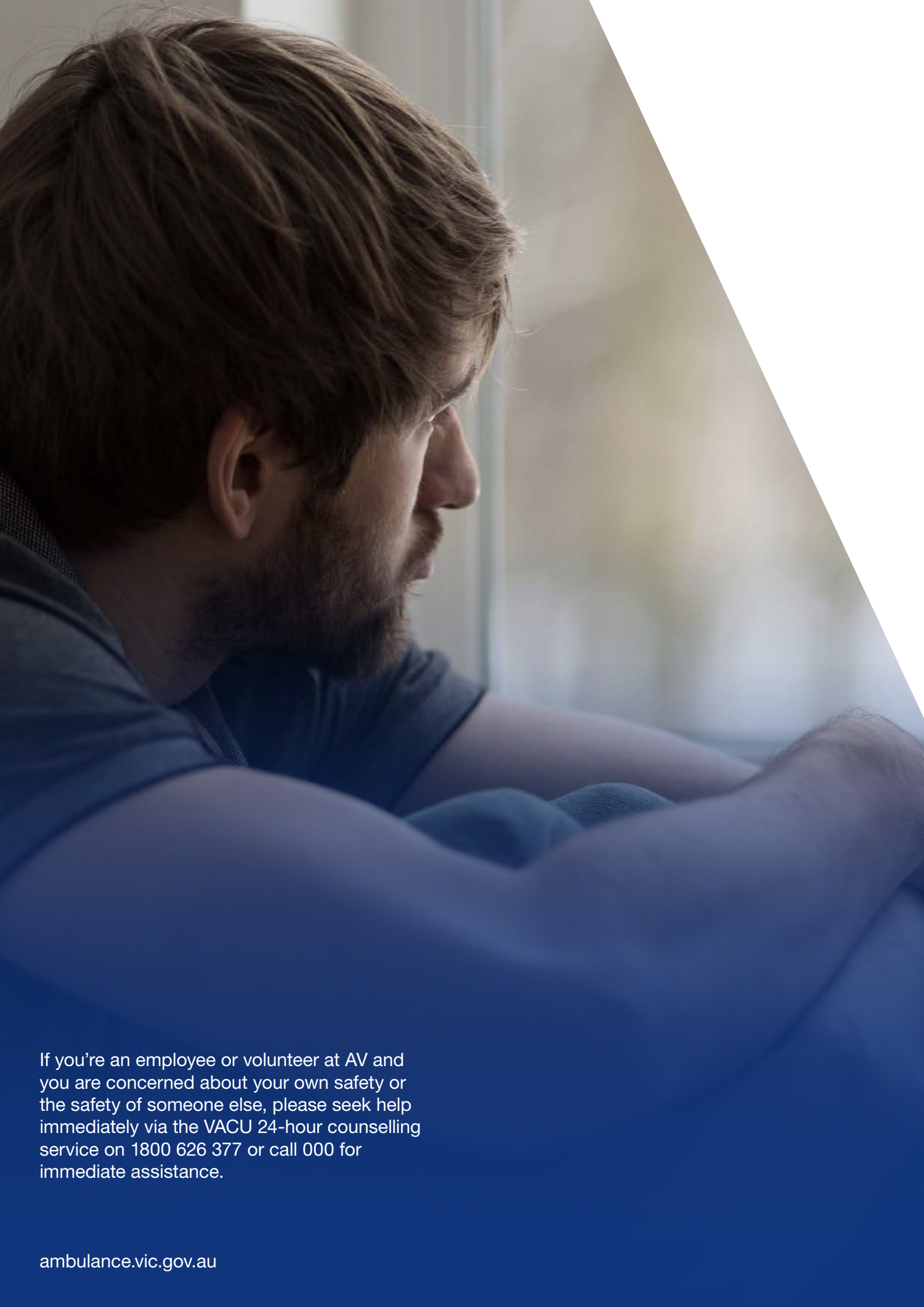
SMART (Stress Management and Resilience Tools) Program

The SMART Program is a prevention and early intervention program aimed at assisting AV employees to manage their psychological wellbeing and resilience in a proactive way. This program is free-of-charge, voluntary and delivered by the Victorian Ambulance Counselling Unit (VACU). The SMART Program is available annually to all of our people, both operational and corporate.



*Working together
we will create a mentally
healthy workplace.*





If you're an employee or volunteer at AV and you are concerned about your own safety or the safety of someone else, please seek help immediately via the VACU 24-hour counselling service on 1800 626 377 or call 000 for immediate assistance.