

Personal Story – Fire and Rescue



Complete *beyondblue's* Answering the Call survey and save lives

Queensland Emergency Fire Service Superintendent Tim Watkins has opened up about his personal story.

He explains why mental health must be a focus in our workplaces, and he encourages anyone invited to participate in this groundbreaking survey to take the time to fill it out.

This is an opportunity for Australian emergency services personnel to again lead the world, not just in caring for communities, but in supporting themselves and their colleagues.

Check your email inbox now to see if you're eligible and complete the survey.

TIM WATKINS: survey is time well spent for two reasons

No emergency services worker deserves to experience what Tim Watkins has been through.

The Queensland Emergency Fire Services Superintendent returned to work in Brisbane just months ago after almost two years dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The condition was triggered by two emergency response events involving road fatalities in the early 1990s.

It took years for the after effects to manifest.

Physically and emotionally drained, Supt Watkins began taking consecutive days off work in 2015.

"I'd actually got to the point where I knew there was something wrong and I just didn't care anymore," Supt Watkins said.

"I was on a slippery slope and I decided to not even apply the brakes.

"It was very fortunate that two days after I made that decision someone actually said 'mate, are you ok?'"

Those four words flicked a switch in Supt Watkins and lit up his long path of recovery.

“I lost count of the number of times I regarded suicide as a viable and attractive solution to the pain I was experiencing, even after my diagnosis of post-traumatic stress.

“It was only the love and support of my family and the medical treatment I was receiving which prevented me from carrying through with my decisions.

“Eventually, I had to decide if returning to work was something I could do or even wanted to do.”

Having returned to work, Supt Watkins was one of many emergency services personnel around the country randomly selected to complete ***beyondblue’s Answering the Call*** survey.

The largest study of its kind in the world, it will build a comprehensive picture of the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel across Australia and the best ways to provide support.

Supt Watkins wanted to tell his story to encourage those selected to complete the survey who have not filled it out will take the time to do so.

“If I can help one person not get to the point I got to, then I think it’s worthwhile,” he said about the survey and its aims.

“It is time well spent for two reasons. Doing the survey, I realised that this is a bit of a self-help check. The second thing is that the information is going somewhere where it’s going to be valued and used.

“There is certainly a desire in our own organisation to do something about this.”

***beyondblue’s Answering the Call* survey**

The world’s largest study on mental health across emergency services personnel is happening right here, right now.

Some of you have been invited to participate, with the aim of the ***beyondblue Answering the Call*** survey to collect invaluable information about the issues affecting the mental health and wellbeing of police and emergency services personnel.

The data will give *beyondblue* the evidence it needs to determine the best ways to provide support.

The survey investigates the prevalence of common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide risk.

It will also collect important information about stigma, use of support services and programs, and factors that impact on the mental health of police and emergency services personnel.

Since October 2017, about 100,000 current and former employees and volunteers in police and emergency services agencies across Australia have been invited to participate.

Check your email account now to see if you’ve been randomly selected to take part in the survey.



This survey is funded by *beyondblue* as part of the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services with support from the Bushfire Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.