

FACT SHEET: POTENTIAL SUPPORT PEOPLE

(Family, Friends, Peers) of injured workers from Ambulance Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria, Triple Zero Victoria, and Victoria Police considering the ESF Residential Wellbeing Program

WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY SERVICES FOUNDATION RESIDENTIAL WELLBEING PROGRAM – RETURN TO WORK INITIATIVE?

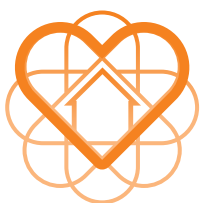
The Emergency Services Foundation Residential Wellbeing Program – Return to Work initiative (ESF RWP-RTWi) ‘the program’ is a project facilitated by the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) to support the return-to-work journey for workers with a mental injury from Ambulance Victoria (AV), Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV), Triple Zero Victoria (TZV) and Victoria Police (VicPol).

The program is a small group (8 participants per program), peer-based, relationship-centred residential retreat. It aims to provide a concentrated period of support over 4 days. Designed to address symptoms associated with exposure to occupational stressors and trauma, the program focuses on sustainable outcomes for injured workers recovering from a mental injury motivated to return to work. Participation in the program is voluntary and complements other treatments that injured workers are receiving for their return-to-work journey.

The program was piloted in 2024 by ESF and found to deliver significant clinical and personal benefits to participants. Most of the pilot participants did not have a mental injury claim but they recognised they needed help to avoid more serious mental injury.

The RWP RTWi is a project funded by WorkSafe to evaluate if the ESF program can provide the same benefit to people with a mental injury and assist their return to work. This is important because we know that ‘good work’ is beneficial to people’s health and wellbeing. In contrast, long-term work absence generally has a negative impact on health and wellbeing.

There will be a comprehensive evaluation of this project and support people must also be willing to contribute to that process. rwp.esf.com.au



Residential Wellbeing Program

ESF EMERGENCY SERVICES FOUNDATION

What is the role of a support person?

The program provides a unique intensive opportunity for participants to focus on improving mental health and wellbeing while developing skills that will prepare them to return to work. There is nothing else like it available in Australia for people with a mental injury and nowhere is the role of a support person recognised or embedded such as with this program.

Research undertaken by ESF in developing the program identified that a support person would be valuable in relation to helping people transition back home and into day-to-day life after they attend the program. This is especially important when return to work is the goal. To avoid a feeling of isolation when they finish the program, participants need someone 'at home' who fully understands how the program works and what they have experienced over the four intensive days.

They will require non-judgmental support to help them stay motivated, engaged, and confident during their recovery and return-to-work journey.

What support will be provided to a support person?

Videos are available that provide more information to help build your understanding of the role a support person is expected to provide. We encourage you to have a look here.



rwp.esf.com.au

Support people will also be invited to attend an online session via Teams with the ESF Senior Program Lead one evening whilst your person is attending the program. You will get to meet with other nominated support people.

Experience has shown that support people welcome this opportunity to connect and ask questions and if you choose to take on the role, you are encouraged to attend.

In addition, you have access to the ESF Senior Program Lead at any time.

The evaluation process

As a support person your perspectives on the program and its impact is especially important. Built into the evaluation process designed by Phoenix Australia from Melbourne University is the opportunity for support people to share their experiences. This will take place four weeks' post program participation in the form of a survey and through a discussion group with the evaluators.

Where is the program held?

The program takes place at 'The Cape Retreat,' Cape Schanck on the Mornington Peninsula over four consecutive days.

Each participant has their own private room with ensuite. There will be no other guests apart from program participants. The ESF clinicians/facilitators will also be staying on site.

It is a venue that ESF rents as required. It has been chosen for its privacy and amenities, homelike setting, and position in nature.

The venue is 103km from Melbourne or around one hour and 20-minute drive. Participants are expected to make their own way to Cape Schanck. You may choose to drive them and be there when they depart the program.



What is involved at the program?

The program involves eight emergency service participants guided by two clinicians over four intensive days of learning and reflection focused on skill development and behaviour change that draws on multiple therapeutic modalities including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Exposure Therapy, Written Exposure Therapy, and Life Review. The techniques and skills that the participants learn aim to prepare and assist with their return to work. It is undoubtedly a lovely setting, but the program is no walk in the park. Participants will be challenged and the days are long. It requires commitment to want to heal and you play a significant role in supporting that journey.

Who is eligible to attend?

To be eligible to participate in the program injured workers must:

- Be a current employee of either Ambulance Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria, Triple Zero Victoria, or Victoria Police
 - Have an approved mental injury claim.
 - Have no or partial capacity to work.
 - Be committed to actively engage in recovery to enable return-to-work.
 - Within the first 26 weeks since their claim lodgement
 - Be 50 years or younger. There is some discretion allowed.
 - Meet the intake requirements which include completing a health and wellbeing survey and a one-on-one online conversation with an ESF clinician to determine suitability for group therapy and capacity to meet the inherent psychological and emotional requirements of the program safely and effectively.
 - Have a referral letter from the workers' treating health provider (THP) must be provided for the worker to be eligible for the program.
 - Agree to the program conditions including participation in a comprehensive project evaluation process and nominating a support person.
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Referral process

- Injured workers can only be referred to the program by a WorkCover Agent. Before making a referral, the Case Manager will aim to avoid disappointment by considering all eligibility criteria and any factors that may exclude an injured worker from participating in the RWP program, including:
 - Clinical or diagnostic factors
 - Safety related issues
 - Behavioural or functional considerations
 - Program specific or logistical issues.

It is important to note that being referred to the program is no guarantee of acceptance. Places are limited and applicants must take part in a two-step intake assessment process which involves an online survey and

In summary – the role of a support person involves:

- Agreement to participate in the evaluation process including a survey and discussion group around four weeks post program conclusion.
 - Attending an online education session with other support people while your person is on the program.
 - Providing non-judgmental support and encouragement as your person prepares to attend the program and when they return home.
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KEY CONTACT

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More information is available on the ESF Website

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**Residential
Wellbeing Program**

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