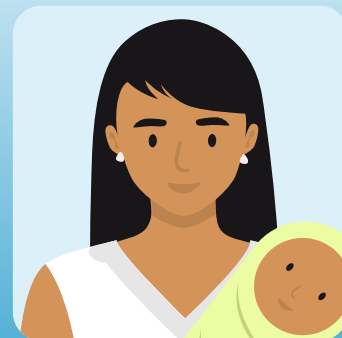




**Ambulance**  
Victoria



# Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan

## 2022-2025

A workforce supported to protect wellbeing



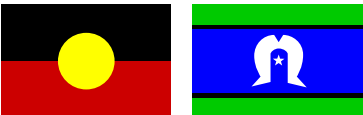
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## Acknowledgement of traditional custodians

Ambulance Victoria respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land throughout Victoria and pays respect to their ancestors and elders, past, present and emerging.



# A Message from Tony Walker, Chief Executive Officer

I am delighted to share Ambulance Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2022-2025 with you.

The mental health and wellbeing of all our people has and continues to be my priority, now more than ever, in these challenging times. We will continue to work together to keep it top of mind when we set direction, make decisions, and implement ideas at AV.

This plan builds on the incredible efforts and achievements of the previous plans, which saw us establish an early intervention, person-centred model for mental health and wellbeing support and transform many of our programs to make them more accessible to everyone at AV.

Our goal for the next three years is clear. We want all AV employees, first responders, and their families to have the knowledge, tools, support and services they need to manage their mental health and wellbeing, through all stages and experiences. We will ensure our support channels are open, accessible, and available to employees, first responders and their families, whatever their needs and preferences.

To achieve this, we must continue our focus on reducing stigma associated with accessing and using mental health and wellbeing support and services. This is fundamental to the transformation AV is undertaking to become a safe, fair and inclusive workplace.

In the 2019-2022 plan, one of our measures of success was an increase in people using our services. Over the life of that plan, we saw a 25 per cent increase in counselling services (Victorian Ambulance Clinicians' Unit (VACU), 24/7 counselling and AV psychology). This did not result from increased need, but rather is a testament to the early intervention model we implemented, which reduced barriers and stigma. We build on these measures in this plan and are dedicated to further increasing the number of people using our services as a preventative and early measure to support their mental health and wellbeing.



It is my commitment that the mental health and wellbeing of all our people is embedded in everything we do at AV. It will be at the forefront of all our decisions and actions.

We will talk about it, and we will not shy away from the conversation, or the work required to achieve our goals. I encourage everyone to share their stories. By speaking openly about mental health and wellbeing, we will break down pre-conceptions, stigma, and barriers.

Mental health and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Together, we are working to improve the mental health and wellbeing of our colleagues and ourselves.

Thank you to all employees, first responders and your families for taking care of yourselves and each other. In doing so, you ensure our organisation can provide Best Care to our communities.

A handwritten signature of Tony Walker in black ink.

**Professor Tony Walker ASM**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Overview

This document outlines the key components of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2022–2025.

This is the third plan of its type for AV, continuing on from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2019-2022 which focused on establishing an early intervention, person centred model of mental health and wellbeing. Against the previous plan we delivered significant program reform and expansion, established the foundations of AV's Wellbeing and Support Services (WSS) and ensured evidence based or evidence informed supports and interventions for AV employees, first responders and their families.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we transformed our programs to accommodate telehealth provisions, and focused on reducing stigma around mental health and wellbeing – measured in part by the increased use of our services over the life of the plan.

As a result of these foundational changes, we have seen the use of WSS services significantly increase year on year, with more requests for wellbeing-based training and education provided across our workforce. This is the beginning, however, and there is still considerable work to be done.

As AV continues significant work to make our organisation more fair, safe and inclusive, this Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2022-2025 will seek to address the drivers of distress, as discovered through comprehensive collaboration and consultation processes including the 2021 Psychosocial Survey.



# Our challenges and opportunities

## Challenges



Providing support to our people  
- **who provide a 24/7, state-wide service** - at the right time



**Stigma**, in particular  
self-stigma related to  
mental health



Empowering our people  
to **seek support** when  
they need it



**Organisational  
environment**

## Opportunities



Increased **education** and  
**awareness** of mental health  
and wellbeing



**Improved mental health** of  
our people and their families



**Partner with our leaders** to  
ensure they are supported and  
feel confident supporting others



**Collaborate with our  
external partners** to ensure  
patient Best Care

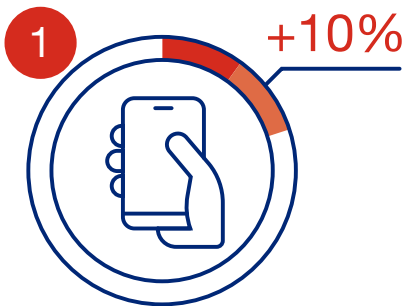
### Links to other strategies and plans:

- ▶ [Health and Safety Action Plan](#)
- ▶ [Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission \(VEOHRC\) report](#)
- ▶ [Strategic Plan](#)

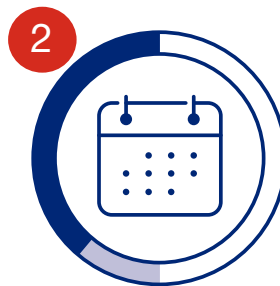
# Performance and success

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

This plan is measured against seven key performance indicators



Ten per cent increase in use of counselling services (face to face or telehealth), VACU network and 24/7 counselling line, year on year.



Reduced rate in incapacity duration (days unable to work due to workplace injury/illness) for psychological injury year on year over the life of the plan.



A target of 80 per cent positive staff experience, allowing for providing clear feedback channels.



Measuring the percentage of our workforce to access services and the stage of career they are to help ensure our services are available for all.



Year on year increase in number of self-referrals to peer and pastoral care.

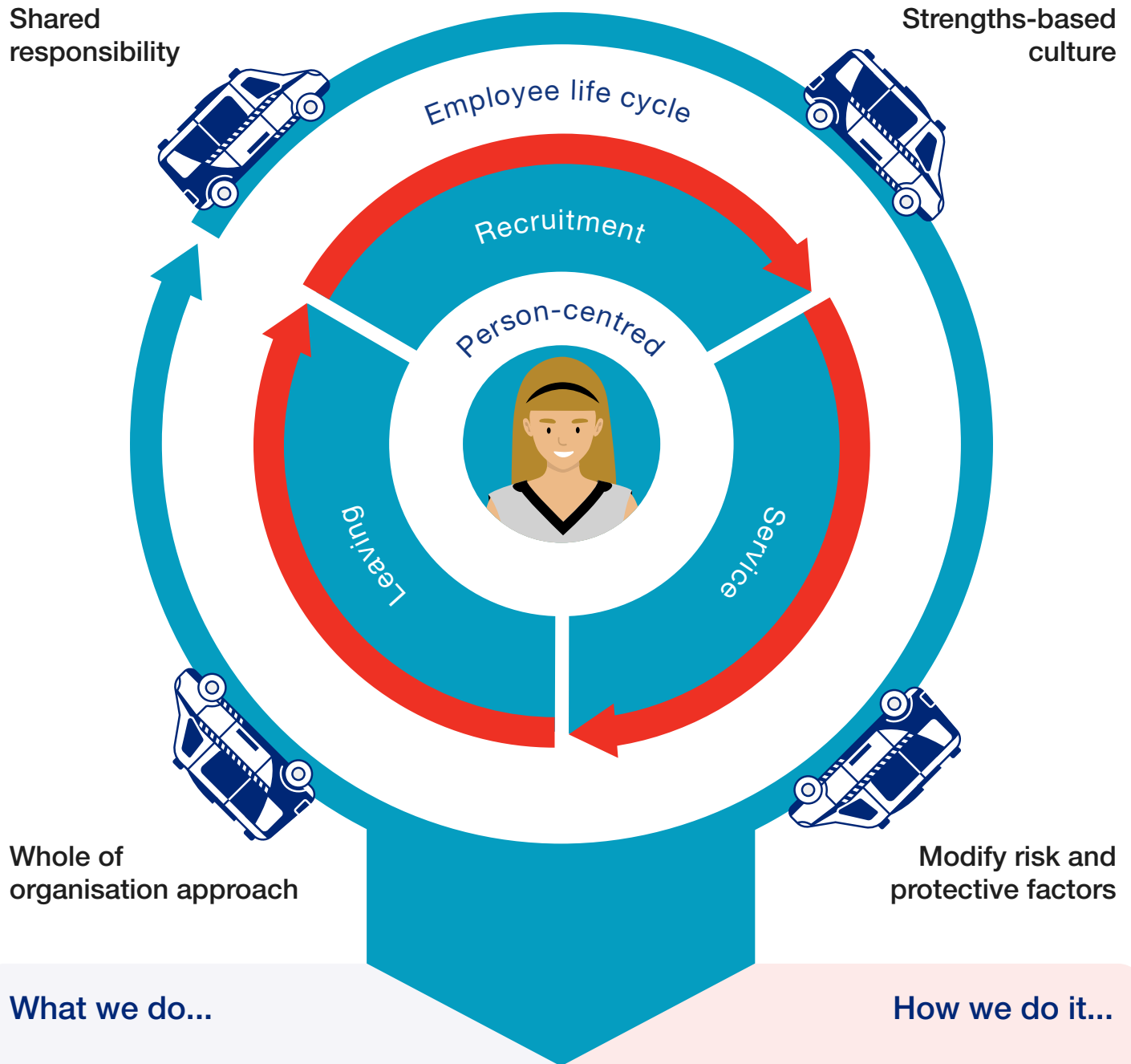


Develop capability to record and evaluate secondary consultations (providing guidance on how to support others).



Monitor and measure psychological claims through Workcover.

# Our model of mental health and wellbeing



1. Person-centred approach focused on reducing barriers to accessing support and minimising stigma
2. Increased oversight of internal and external services available to everyone
3. Support individuals and their families throughout the life cycle of their career – from recruitment and onboarding to retirement

1. Shared responsibility
2. A whole of organisation approach
3. Building a strengths-based culture
4. Protecting mental health and wellbeing by modifying risk and protective factors

# Our goal

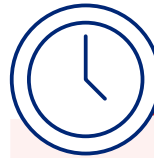
## A workforce supported to protect wellbeing

To help achieve our goal, we have embedded our work into four key pillars to guide our objectives.



### Prevention and education

- ▶ Awareness and education for increased early recognition and proactive planning to maintain mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Understanding and prevention of climate related mental health distress
- ▶ AV SMART 2.0® Program
- ▶ Graduate Ambulance Paramedic (GAP) mental health and wellbeing education program – continuous improvement
- ▶ Women's health initiative
- ▶ Family Safe Space education
- ▶ Leaders Education Package
- ▶ Reducing stigma – pre-incident education and awareness training and campaigns
- ▶ Workplace visits from the Peer Support Dog Program



### Early intervention

- ▶ Pilot Buddy Program
- ▶ Integrated Wellbeing Plans
- ▶ Suicide awareness and prevention training
- ▶ Development of evaluation model for programs and interventions
- ▶ SOLAR Program



### Building on strengths

- ▶ Expansion of Victorian Ambulance Clinicians Unit (VACU)
- ▶ Accessibility to Wellbeing and Support Services
- ▶ Community resources and partnerships



### Partnering for success

- ▶ Peer and Pastoral Care research project
- ▶ Research partnerships



# Prevention and education

To meet our goal of building a workforce supported to protect mental health and wellbeing, prevention and education is key. We will have more awareness campaigns targeted to the needs of our people and will work to help you build connections and grow your mental health and wellbeing toolkit.

## Our priorities



SOLAR Program

The SOLAR (Skills fOr Life Adjustment and Resilience) Online Pilot Program will be evaluated and pending results, modified or expanded.



Family Safe Space Education

Family and social connections are key to helping people be well. We will continue to educate and promote family-based support, pastoral care, and consult and include families in the design and delivery of mental health and wellbeing supports at AV.



Graduate Ambulance Paramedic (GAP) Mental Health and Wellbeing Education Program

Mindarma online skills development will be included in GAP training.



Leaders Education Package

Teaching and supporting leaders to respond to evolving mental health and wellbeing issues in the workplace i.e. AV MANERS®



Women's health initiative

Education campaign focused on mental health issues affecting women and girls specifically.



# Early intervention

By intervening early, we have the opportunity to identify early warning signs and symptoms of mental ill health and prevent progression, while teaching new skills and pathways for support.

## Our priorities



### Pilot Buddy Program

Establish a Buddy Program with two sub-groups in 2023.

**1. New graduates moving to other geographical locations**

This enables graduates to be supported in the transition to new locations (particularly those in remote and rural areas).

**2. Employees transitioning to retirement**

Utilising skills and experience and enable retiring employees to share their wisdom, knowledge and local information.



### Suicide awareness and prevention training

Deliver a suicide prevention program tailored to the emergency services sector with the aim of reducing stigma, increasing literacy and competency in supporting individuals at risk.



### Integrated Wellbeing Plans

Develop integrated wellbeing plans with leadership to build knowledge and capacity to support the wellbeing of their teams.



### Development of evaluation model

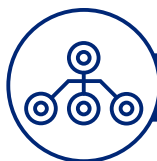
Develop a contemporary evaluation model to demonstrate and further measure effectiveness of wellbeing interventions.



# Building on strengths

We will continue to expand the areas of support that we have successfully developed, implemented, and evaluated.

## Our priorities



### Expansion of VACU

Further expand VACU network in regional and remote areas.



### Community resources and partnerships

Identify trusted partners, finding social support and referral pathways, ensure clinical governance (where appropriate) and enable referrals to specialised support.



### Accessibility to Wellbeing & Support Services

Streamline access to wellbeing and support services through a 12 month project to identify and implement an efficient and easy process for people.



# Partnering for success

We want to continue learning and growing with support from our external partners to help us achieve our goal of creating a workforce supported to protect wellbeing.

## Our priorities



### Peer and Pastoral Care Research Project

Undertake a longitudinal study (5 years) with a research partner to determine the efficacy of the role of social support on mental health and wellbeing.



### Research partnerships

Explore research partnerships to look at opportunities that are in line with the objectives of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2022-2025.



If you're an employee or first responder, or family member of an AV employee or first responder 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.

