

The National

Firefighter

VOL 1 EDITION 1

Preview Edition 2022

INSIDE

Growth After
Trauma

*Lessons In
Ordinary
Courage*

Promoting &
Celebrating
Women in
Firefighting

FRONTLINE YOGA



ISSN 2208-4975

000 FOUNDATION



Established in 2020, the 000 Foundation is an ACNC registered charity that assist emergency services personnel with exciting new mental health initiatives to help curb the impact of mental health injuries in our community!

We operate the yearly Melbourne Firefighter Stair Climb and use that money to help other grass roots charities

Over \$1m has been spent on the health and well-being of emergency services personnel



Other programs include:

- Operation Soul Surf
- Equine Therapy
- Assistance to families
- Fundraising days
- The Long Walk Home

**To find out more, visit oofoundation.org.au
Or email us**

contact@000foundation.org.au



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EDITORIAL BOARD

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.

DESIGN

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The opinions presented in our magazine are those of the authors of the articles. We enjoy the opportunity to present a variety of viewpoints but do not necessarily endorse them.



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



WELCOME TO THE NATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS MAGAZINE

As climate change heightens both the frequency and intensity of bushfires, firefighters are being tested to new extremes literally. Bushfires are becoming increasingly more frequent, and the bushfire season is coming earlier and lasting longer because of climate change.

Firefighting is changing, and changing for the worse. Climate change causes extreme weather, which in turn causes bush fires and other natural disasters.

This is the firefighters' workplace, and it is a workplace that is becoming increasingly unsafe.

Being a firefighter is no ordinary job. More than fighting fires, firefighters help anyone, anywhere, anytime. Not only do they respond to fires and explosions, but also in some cases, to

car accidents and medical emergencies. They do so much more than battle blazes.

Firefighters often operate in stressful situations, particularly when people are injured or threatened with injury. It is a physically and psychologically demanding job, especially during major emergencies, and involves quick thinking, teamwork and endurance.

Firefighting is indeed a risky job. Every firefighter is aware that there is a risk they may not come home at the end of a job. It requires a special person to take that on. As firefighters, the nature of the job means that they never know exactly what the next traumatic job will be, or when it will occur.

Mental health awareness has never been more important. Firefighters are fiercely loyal, and care deeply about making their community better.

Being a firefighter is a special career. It is so much more than just a job. Most firefighters BECOME a firefighter because of a desire to help others.

Firefighting is a tough gig. Firefighters are inspirational. Every day they face new dangers and every day they find ways to fix them. Firefighters see and experience things that affect them both mentally and physically. Despite this, they continue to do what they do.

Thank you to our wonderful men and women we call our firefighters. You are our heroes.

Leigh Leonard
Editor
The National Firefighter



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Foundation 000

PICTURES: UNIFORM PHOTOGRAPHY

We are acutely aware that Mental Health is the underlying crisis of COVID-19.

Whilst the tag line of the pandemic was 'we are all in this together', when it comes to mental health the message is no different. This is not an issue that any government can throw enough funding at alone to achieve a cure, if cure is even possible... A thought that seems akin to world peace. Each and every Government, Organisation and Individual has an obligation to support those impacted by poor mental health, directly or indirectly.

More than 3000 Australians die by suicide each year, that is more than double the annual road toll in our country. Suicide and mental health injuries including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress (PTSI) are more prevalent in occupations with higher exposures to trauma. This is evident by the estimation that 30% of first responders will develop

behavioural health conditions compared to 20% of the general public.

When considering our Emergency Service and Defence Force personnel, the very nature of their role in society poses a greater risk that they will experience mental illness in their lifetime. They spend their careers dedicated to assisting their communities in tragic and difficult situations. They attend incidents that individually in isolation, are powerful enough to bring entire communities to their knees. Emergency Service and Defence personnel are at risk of exposure to trauma not just every day that they turn up to work, but multiple times in each shift.

This repeated exposure to direct and vicarious trauma through the high stress and hazardous environments in which they operate continuously has profound impacts on their health and lifestyle. They are expected to run head on into scenes that the average

civilian runs from as fast as possible in the opposite direction, and they do so willingly because of their incredible disposition to make a difference. Eventually and sadly for some, they are forever different for their experiences that cannot be unseen, unheard, unfelt.

It's no secret that mental health has attracted a legacy of stigma arisen from a lack of understanding of mental illness/ injury. Stigma associated with Mental health has been a common and damaging deterrent for sufferers to speak up about what they are or have experienced and to seek treatment through fear of judgement and marginalisation.

Many stay silent through fear that their employment will be impacted, their reputation socially or professionally blemished. They suffer privately so as not to suffer publicly or bring upon their family and peers the effects of labelling and exclusion, shame and worthlessness from such misinformed

stereotyping.

Whilst mental health awareness and responsibility has taken a positive shift in recent years, there is a long way to go to achieve a state of normalisation. Governments are supporting more and more initiatives to address poor mental health in the community through support programs, health system support and enshrining responsibilities of governments, organisations, and individuals in legislative changes.

With this has come a heavier focus on wellbeing in workplaces and at home. A shift that is finally recognising that health is not just physical and that undertaking treatment for poor mental health should be no more shameful than receiving medical treatment for a heart condition, diabetes, or a sore throat.

The 000 Foundation was incorporated in 2020 and registered as a deductible gift recipient with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission. The foundation matured out of a group of volunteers who had an interest in raising funds and awareness for issues that heavily impacted the emergency service community.

Since 2017 their focus has settled on advocating and raising funds for mental

health. Along with running the annual Melbourne Firefighter Stair Climb that provides significant support to charities like Lifeline, they also support grass roots mental health initiatives and provide grants to individuals for wellbeing support from their public benevolent fund.

The Foundation aims to break down the stigma around mental health and be a leader in the emergency services

travel alone and in hope, one that will in future never be travelled at all. Closer to freedom. Its not pretty, but mental health struggles can be ugly.

In 2023, The Melbourne Firefighter Stair climb (run by 000 Foundation) will be in it's 10th year. The event simulates the actions of an emergency service crew entering a burning high rise building to perform rescue operations wearing self contained breathing

apparatus (SCBA). The weight of the operational equipment that each participant carries is approximately 25kg, also a symbol of the emotional weight carried by someone suffering from mental illness or injury.

A Virtual format of the Stair Challenge is open to members of the public to "Step Up" and play their part in breaking stigmas associated with mental health and to raise much need

funds to support mental health. The event has raised over \$3.5million for charity since it began in 2014.

For more information visit 000Foundation.org.au, scan the QR code below or email us at contact@000foundation.org.au



credit: Uniform photography

community in the mental health space, giving hope to others that they may find health. Every journey is different and each individual falls to a different depth. We are here to help them get back up, we climb stairs to signify the heavy burden that that sufferers carry on the way back up from those depths and we do it together in a show of solidarity that no sufferer is alone.

A journey that no one should ever



AUTHOR:
Fiona Corfield
000Foundation Director





Lessons in Ordinary Courage

New First Responder Resilience Program

ASK ANY FIREFIGHTER if they'd prefer to run into a burning building or talk about how they're feeling and chances are they'll opt for the fire.

Courage comes in many guises and the ordinary courage of simply talking is often the hardest to muster.

For most people, it doesn't come naturally. We're not trained to open up, we don't want to appear vulnerable, we think that whatever's making us not feel ourselves is our fault and that, if we just get on with life, it will go away.

Unfortunately that rarely happens and the risk of opting not to share your feelings can be greater than the risk of tackling a raging fire.

Unlike a busted shoulder, psychological injuries are hidden. They often go undiagnosed, they fester and there's no easy fix. Prevention is the key and that's what the new First Responder Resilience Program (FRRP) is all about.

The program, developed by AFSM recipients Jim Smith and Mark Dobson,

is designed to build sustainable mental health leadership capability, increase psychological resilience in professional and volunteer emergency workers and minimise the negative psychological impact of major disaster events.

"We've proven that empowering leaders with ordinary courage creates mentally healthy workplaces and teams," Mark says. "The FRRP training gives leaders the strength to connect. It teaches them to identify the signs if their team members are not travelling well and gives them the tools to listen, talk and manage psychological injury. When that happens there's a shift in culture - once leaders 'reach in', people start to reach out and that's what changes lives."

When Jim and Mark worked together at Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) they launched evidence-based programs

that changed attitudes about mental health, positively impacting individual firefighters and teams. While people wellbeing was their key goal, the spin-off was the organisation's improved bottom line, with higher staff retention and significant savings in injury management costs.

Now they've joined forces again at Ordinary Courage, a new workplace mental health consultancy. Jim, a retired FRNSW Deputy Commissioner, former NSW State Emergency Service Commissioner and current Rural Fire Service volunteer, joined this year as General Manager.

"Mark, who still works as a station officer with FRNSW, founded Ordinary Courage two years ago and needed someone to run it," Jim says. "I jumped at the opportunity. We both have a passion for creating mentally healthy workplaces and we know that's achievable. We want to help other emergency services and the wider business community through the new customised programs we are developing at Ordinary Courage."

Mark, who also volunteers with Disaster Relief Australia, said FRRP is tailor made for first responders and will be co-designed and co-facilitated by each organisation.

"We want FRRP to be a program that's designed for emergency workers by emergency workers," he says. "Ordinary Courage has the expertise, tools and framework, but collaborating with people at the coalface ensures the best outcomes."

Mark speaks from experience. Since the early 1990s, he has been helping people work through the trauma of stressful scenarios, from war zones to devastating fires and natural disasters. Before joining the fire service, he worked a Physical Training Instructor

with the Royal Australian Navy, responsible for both the physical and mental health of HMAS Darwin's crew during deployments to the Gulf War and Somalia.

"Back then 'morale' was the word we used for mental health," Mark says. "As a society, we've come a long way, but as individuals the majority of people still find it hard to reach out if they're not feeling themselves. And that's particularly so in the first responder space. The majority - if not all - emergency workers sign up or volunteer for the job because they have a strong sense of community and they genuinely care about people. FRRP is one way we can give back to them."

Mark has worked with hundreds of emergency workers who struggle with the image of their bravery and strength, heroism and fearlessness. Their courage.

"Frontline workers may have all those qualities, but they bristle at the tags and some suffer in silence due to the weight of perceived expectation," Mark says. "As firefighters we've all seen it - the mate who doesn't laugh as much, who's still great on the job, but struggling at home. Sometimes, it's the mate who quits the service he or she loves. It's sad and unnecessary because we know their suffering can be prevented. It just takes a little ordinary courage."



If you'd like to find out more about the FRRP program visit ordinarycourage.com.au.



NSW SESVA LEADING THE ORDINARY COURAGE WAY/ JOURNEY

AND EVERYONE'S WELCOME TO JOIN THEM

THE PAST FOUR YEARS have been particularly tough for emergency workers. Fire and floods across the nation have taken a toll, but the new First Responder Resilience Program (FRRP) offers light on the horizon and it's attracted the NSW SES Volunteers Association (SESVA) as the first organisation to sign up for the program.

"There are psychological first aid programs out there, but SESVA's leaders wanted to create something different for their volunteers," says SESVA consultant John Denny AFSM.

"They felt the FRRP program provided the fit they were looking for so we applied to the Federal Government for a NEMA Black Summer Bushfire Grant, which was successful and the FRRP training will be rolled out in 31 bushfire-impacted communities during 2022."

SESVA sees the program as an investment in its people and in the future.

“FRRP is a unique program that plugs a hole we’ve been looking to fill for some time,” John says. “It’s consultative, engaging and Ordinary Courage was happy to customise a course specifically for SESVA that offers emotional content in leadership which has only really only been paid lip service previously.”

SESVA is inviting all emergency and community volunteers to do the FRRP training.

“We’re all in this together, especially in regional communities - Surf Life Saving and Rural Fire Service volunteers, community leaders - they’re all on the

frontline in times of disaster and most they’re helping people they know, which exacerbates the trauma,” John says. “No matter what uniform you wear or if you wear no uniform at all, you’re welcome to join the course because the need to train leaders to be emotionally aware of team environment extends beyond SESVA members.”

That’s the spirit of ordinary courage.

Mary-Anne Dibbs
Ordinary Courage
www.ordinarycourage.com.au

To enquire about joining SESVA’s First Responder Resilience Program training click on the QR code.



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Living with Burnout, Compassion Fatigue or PTSD? We Can Help

Moving Beyond Trauma is a residential program that assists people with PTSD, CPTSD or at risk of developing PTSD, to reclaim their lives. The Quest for Life Centre’s nationally acclaimed programs are delivered by a highly qualified professional team in a confidential, safe environment.

Drawing on an understanding of neuroscience and the impact of trauma on the brain and body, the program supports, educates and empowers people with practical tools, skills and strategies for getting back in the driver’s seat of your life.

“The course has made me want to embrace life for the first time in years.”
- Bob

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program fee for readers of this magazine - just mention ‘National Firefighters Magazine’ at the time of booking!

Promoting and Celebrating Women in Firefighting



OUR VISION

Promoting equity across our sector to empower all women to embrace their strengths.

OUR MISSION

In collaboration with individuals, communities and emergency services, we build confidence and empower women to achieve their full potential and be supported, as women, in their roles within our sector.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of Wafa are:

1. To facilitate and support women in taking an active role in defining and shaping the role of women in the firefighting and emergency services industries by promoting the expectations of and contribution by women to the sector.
2. To provide a vehicle for women, in conjunction with their colleagues in the industry, to:
 - Foster and promote increased understanding and awareness of the contribution and capabilities that women bring to the firefighting and emergency management sector;
 - Create opportunities for frank exchange and discussion of the challenges, issues and opportunities for women in the sector;
 - Facilitate change through solutions

and actions cooperatively developed with our colleagues in the sector; and

- Generate opportunities for the development of knowledge and practical experience in roles of leadership and management.

HISTORY

In 2005, the inaugural Australasian Women in Firefighting Forum (WIFF 2005) was held at the Holiday Inn, Sydney Airport.

Three resolutions were made at this Forum:

1. A report on the Forum was to be presented to the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) – completed in 2006;
2. Another Conference was to be held – Women in Firefighting 2006 was held at Darling Harbour in Sydney in June 2006; and
3. A professional association was to be established for women in the Australasian firefighting industry.

Consequently, Women and Firefighting Australasia (Wafa) was incorporated in November 2007. Since that time Wafa has been steadily working to promote women in firefighting by working with organisations, fire services and individual members.

Wafa has experience running several highly successful conferences since the inaugural Women in Firefighting forum in Sydney in 2005. Since then conferences have been held in Darling Harbour, the Yarra Valley, Adelaide, Canberra, and most recently in Brisbane in 2016.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH - STATEMENT FROM THE BOARD OF Wafa

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

Following the 2018 Women and Firefighting Australasia (Wafa) Conference "Shaping the New Norm" the Wafa Board commissioned an Outcomes Statement^[1] which was supported by the Gender and Disaster Pod and was generously funded by Emergency Management Australia. The outcomes statement is a legacy statement and provides insights on current best practices, future directions, actions and opportunities for women in firefighting. Discrimination and sexual harassment against women in firefighting and emergency services were identified as a key area of concern. It continues to be an ongoing area of concern for women in the sector and as such should be a key focus for agencies and organisations.

Experiencing discrimination, harassment and/or assault within a workplace can cause great harm, both to the women involved, and bystanders and can result in women leaving the sector. When women do report, some experience further harassment and isolation. In addition, good men who want to be allies are simply not aware of how often discrimination, harassment victimisation and assault are occurring or they lack the tools to be an effective ally.

"BULLYING, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, ASSAULT AND INTIMIDATION ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE REGARDLESS OF GENDER, RANK OR AGENCY. THE ACTIONS OF THE FEW SHOULD NOT RUIN THE REPUTATIONS OF THE MAJORITY."

Wafa acknowledges the work of organisations like the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC), the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC (BHN-CRC) and the Champions of Change group who continually work in the gender equity space to assist agencies with creating meaningful change.

Recent reports however highlight the fact there is still a long way to go in some areas. In particular supporting volunteers, to ensure that they have appropriate pathways to report inappropriate behaviours within the workplace and adequate support, regardless of their decision to report.

Wafa will continue to advocate for safe workplaces for all and to ensure everyone feels supported and empowered within our sector.

Practical Steps to End Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

- Good response structures to efficiently address incidents including a policy for safe reporting (including optional independent third-party reporting mechanisms), ongoing support and a workplace culture that stands up against harassment and discrimination. In a volunteer context, these reporting and support structures need to consider the ongoing safety of the woman in the context of living in the same community as a perpetrator(s).
- Bystander training to empower people to call out bad behaviour.
- Responding well is not enough. Best practice to reduce harassment and discrimination aims to stop harassment and discrimination at the

start. Prevention strategies include gender equity training – tailored sessions for senior management, middle management and human resources sections to reinforce gender equity in the workplace. In a volunteer context, brigade management must also be considered.

- Even with these strategies in place, women may still be exposed to sexual assault, discrimination and harassment, and as a result leave the service. To gauge the prevalence of incidents, and the impact they are having on women leaving emergency service work, exit interviews might include a question specifically on discrimination and sexual harassment.
- The inclusion of anonymous reporting opportunities in staff/volunteer satisfaction surveys might provide more details about the prevalence and impact of discrimination and sexual harassment.





FRONTLINE YOGA
RESILIENCE | STRENGTH | CONNECTION

Resilience, Strength, Connection

SO WHO ARE FRONTLINE YOGA (FY)? assist participants.

WE ARE AUSTRALIA'S FIRST AND ONLY NATIONAL YOGA PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR FIRST RESPONDERS, EMERGENCY SERVICES AND MILITARY VETERANS.

We offer best practice, trauma aware yoga, and our classes are FREE to all frontline professionals, and as a charitable organisation, we are run by volunteers and a small admin team. All Frontline yoga teachers are trained in trauma aware yoga techniques, and have an excellent understanding of the impact of a well-modified Yoga class to

Through the use of mindful modifications, props, pose alternatives and breathing techniques our teachers supports the physical differences of participants and offers effective techniques for stress reduction.

FY CLASSES ARE TAUGHT SPECIFICALLY FOR PERSONNEL THAT SERVE OR HAVE SERVED ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE COMMUNITY.

The classes are specifically for Firefighters, Paramedics, Police, Military, Healthcare Workers & Volunteer Emergency Services. This includes Current, Ex serving and retired. The public is also welcome by donation.

Classes are Trauma Aware and Culturally Informed. They assist in maintaining Resilience, Strength and Connection. All classes are suitable for beginners, taught with clear instructions and are particularly suitable for people that may be experiencing chronic stress, depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress.

ATTEND

Frontline Yoga offers classes in NSW, ACT, Tasmania, SA, QLD and live online, via Zoom.

Bookings are recommended to ensure you secure a place as numbers are capped at some of our venues.

FRONTLINE YOGA INC

Thinking yoga is not for you?? Next time you walk past a yoga studio and think, 'yoga isn't for me'... think again. It may change your life.

Just ask Chris Thompson-Lang. The Australian Army veteran was on his way to the pub when he walked past a yoga studio. An introductory offer prompted him to change course...**A LIFE-CHANGING DECISION THAT WOULD ALTER THE DIRECTION OF CHRIS' WHOLE LIFE**

"Yoga has promoted a level of choice in my life that has seen me have better relationships, better nutrition, better intimacy and more enjoyment each day," Thompson-Lang said.

As an engineer in the Army, Chris experienced peace keeping and combat



the student in recognising the distinction between the things we can and cannot control. It helps to create a space between stimulus and response. Promoting conscious choices over-reactivity.

WHAT SKILLS /FITNESS LEVEL DO YOU NEED TO GET STARTED?

Anyone can start.

Frontline Yoga is focused on being accessible to everybody. It considers the most common injuries experienced by Emergency Services like Fire Fighters, Paramedics and veterans and provides suitable modifications. Any good yoga teacher will be able to support beginner students and offer variations to progress them towards a deeper practice. That's why we say "practice" yoga, rather than "do" yoga.

WHY IS YOGA A GOOD OPTION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS?

Like other Frontline professionals, Fire Fighters have committed their lives to service. Often putting the job above their own comfort or physical security and dealing with the inherent stresses and pressures of fighting fires and putting their lives on the line. Yoga is for warriors. It's a means of deeply restoring the nervous system and maintaining physicality.

Yoga allows people to increase their ability to focus and problem-solve, gives them heightened situational awareness, and helps them make intelligent gut reactions to situations. People who practice yoga also have the

ability to make self-directed biological changes, meaning they can impact the functioning of their brain and nervous system through their own actions.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO FRONTLINE WORKERS WHO MIGHT BE LOOKING TO GIVE YOGA A TRY, BUT NOT SURE HOW TO START?

Don't worry If you can't touch your toes. Nobody begins yoga ready to "perform" the postures. It's a gradual process to learn about how your body feels when you take in different directions. Be courageous and then be patient.

You don't have go all the way on your first day. Remember it's a practice. It takes months, years and even decades to reach the full expression of most postures. Moving towards them is where the magic happens. Not only does yoga help control the body, but it also helps reign in the uncontrolled mind.

HOW DOES YOGA SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING?

The breath-centred movement reminds students how to use their inhalation and exhalation to guide the body. Breath influences the stimulation or suppression of stress hormones. During a yoga class, breathing is guided to suppress stress hormones and engage deep To join one of Frontline Yoga's in-person classes or online classes head to their website <https://frontlineyoga.com.au/classes/>

SOCIALS:
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FRONTLINE YOGA INC





Growth After TRAUMA

JOHN DUFFY has been an active member of the Penrose Rural Fire Service (RFS) for the last eight years and recently experienced the Black Summer Fires.

During his firsthand experience of the fires, he noticed some key things about trauma - in that it is often minimised, and in some cases, its existence denied.

For John, his anxiety was so real it felt like two clenched fists in his chest "hanging to a

sense of self".

For almost two months in late 2019 and early 2020 John, as part of the Penrose RFS crew, spent week after week fighting the Green Wattle and Morton fires in places like Yanderra, The Oaks, Wingello and their own village of Penrose.

Once the fires had stopped burning, the physical sensation that John felt inside was far from extinguished. This feeling was so acute that he needed

medical advice.

After the fires John sought treatment and support for the anxiety he was suffering, and in 2022 attended the Quest for Life Foundation's Moving Beyond Trauma program in Bundanoon to help work through the ongoing anxiety and lingering trauma.

"It was so present in my life that when it started to ease, I could feel it leaving - I could feel the place where it used to live" John said.

John's Experience of the Black Summer Bushfires

While at Wingello the Penrose RFS came face-to-face with a firestorm.

"I now know what it's like to have a fire coming at you. You hear something like a freight train off in the distance, a roaring sound."

"One or two embers start falling on the ground and you start putting out those embers with the hose, then more embers are coming down, one every ten seconds.

A minute late it's fifty embers every ten seconds - you quickly get to the point where you can't put out those embers."

"What I saw was a glow on the ground coming from one direction, then it crowned in the trees and just skipped through the top of those trees, so fast. Then the wind picked up and hit us, and we started property protection."

"Then it just sort of went timeless. It felt like it went by in ten minutes, but also

"I now know what it's like to have a fire coming at you. You hear something like a freight train off in the distance, a roaring sound."

felt like hours and hours, I still don't know for sure the timing of it all."

The wind was strong, the smoke and embers were thick, and John had to get down on his hands and knees to get as close to the ground as possible in order to breathe.

"At one point we were standing behind a house with a hose, the nozzle off. I'd quickly run round the corner and hose the house and bushes that were alight then run back behind the house for refuge and to breathe."

At Wingello the brigade saved homes, but John says



it was more like the homes saved them.

"They were the only thing protecting us when the firestorm came in."

Trauma from the Sustained Intensity of Natural Disasters

For John, although the fires themselves were traumatic, he says the biggest impact on his wellbeing was not being able to switch off due to the length of the emergency.

"Wingello was bad, but it was more the intensity of just not switching off for six or seven weeks that totally fried my nervous system. We would be out on the truck for twelve or more hours,

when we got back to the shed, I found I continued to be hypervigilant and unable to get any respite.

"First, we went out of area, up around Yanderra and around the back of Warragamba Dam where the fires were burning north of us in Penrose. Then we were told to back off that fire and get back to our own village to get ready for the Wattle Creek fires coming from the south."

"One evening, after a 12-hour shift on the truck, we were on our way back to fuel up when we got a call that a backburn had flared up and spread to Penrose village. We were among the first on the scene, luckily only a few fences were lost and some homes were lost."

"The intensity of the fire season was never-ending; it was just day after day after day. My family evacuated

multiple times, which was pretty terrifying."

In recent months John has been able to relate to the intensity experienced by other Australians, including people in the NSW Northern Rivers region who dealt with catastrophic floods this year, and people on the NSW south coast and Victoria around Echuca who rushed to build a flood levy.

"Again, it's the intensity of these situations. The people in the floods in Lismore, they were just in it the whole time, and the people on the tractors down south building that levy. There's just a certain intensity where people don't get to switch off, they get stuck in 'on' mode. That's the trauma that I see happening."

Post-Traumatic Recovery after Natural Disaster

"The thing that got me to Quest was hearing Brendon from Balmoral RFS

MENTAL HEALTH

talking on a documentary. He mentioned the hypervigilance you can get after not being able to switch off, and I just thought, 'wow, that's what I've been doing this whole time'. I had been such in a heightened state for such a long time, it was then that I made the decision to go to Quest."

When asked how his recovery is going almost three years on from the fires, John says he's still on the journey.

"It's post-traumatic recovery,

there's no quick fix. It's about self-care, self-nurturing, and being educated around what trauma is and how it manifests in my life and in my body.

Had I not gone to Quest I probably would have just struggled on. I saw it as a powerful choice, I just knew I had to do it. I believe Petrea and her team bring great value to help people understand and become equipped to heal their trauma. I also see Quest having an important role to play in educating

organisations to better understand and spot the signs of trauma."

So many others did so much more than I did. There's no rhyme or reason about who walks away with trauma, or any timetable for when the signs and symptoms may appear.

For some, there seems to be a stigma around talking about trauma or admitting that you are affected. By sharing my story, I'm hoping to remove some of this stigma.



Written by John Duffy and Vanessa Watson.

The Quest for Life Foundation helps people living with the consequences of trauma, illness and natural disasters to find hope, healing and peace.

The Foundation provides educational self-help programs in the Southern Highlands, NSW and community-based workshops around Australia that encourage, educate and empower people to improve their resilience and peace of mind during difficult times. People reach out to Quest for help during their most challenging times, whether that hardship is caused by physical or mental illness, domestic or family violence, financial strain, grief, trauma or natural disaster.

questforlife.org.au



Quest for Life Foundation leads the way in trauma care

Established in 1989 by Petrea King, the Quest for Life Foundation has assisted 125,000 people through intensive educational programs for people living with depression, anxiety, trauma, and chronic illness. Our clinically proven results make a profound difference to people's lives and positively change the damaging effects of trauma, along with reducing death by suicide. Our suite of services are available as residential or outreach programs and assist those in professions including military, first responders, veterans, medical professionals, solicitors, and the broader community. Residential programs are conducted at our Centre in the Southern Highlands, NSW.

57-75% of Australians will experience a traumatic event and may go on to suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD reduces life expectancy, impacts families and affects people from all walks of life. People employed in traumatic work environments with repeated daily exposures are at risk of burnout, drug and alcohol dependency, family breakdown, depression, and suicide. These problems can manifest years after the events, which is why it's essential to explore both short and long-term care.

Our *Moving Beyond Trauma* 5-day residential program will lead those requiring a longer immersive stay into our *Healing Trauma* 21-day program scheduled to commence in 2024.

The Charity

Quest for Life Foundation is an Australian charity with DGR1 status and we rely on donations, bequests, fundraising and grants. We have a commitment to make our services available for everyone in need, no matter their financial circumstances. It is often people who can least afford our programs who need them the most.

Trauma Informed Care

Quest supports those in need via our trusted and trauma-informed team. From the first contact, we will assist and support you through your healing journey.

Programs are funded by the NDIS, DVA or Workers Compensation for eligible people. Subsidies are available for those affected by domestic violence or are financially disadvantaged.

Our clients include Police Legacy, NSW Police and NSW Police Association, Bushfire Recovery Program, Carers NSW & ACT, War Widows Guild of Australia, Catholic Education, BioMedica and TasNetworks.

While there is limited data on the prevalence of trauma in Australia, 2 studies suggest that 57-75% of Australians will experience a potentially traumatic event at some point in their lives (Mills et al. 2011; Rosenman 2002).

Residential programs

- *Healing Your Life*
- *Moving Beyond Trauma*
- *Quest for Life*
- *Reclaiming Your Brain*
- *Taking Control of Chronic Pain*

"This program changed my life for the better, I'm no longer stuck in my grief and now have the skills to find happiness again".

The science

Quest takes a whole-person recovery-oriented approach to wellbeing, utilising latest scientific research into neuroscience, epigenetics and evidence-based health and healing modalities.

University of Queensland research shows improvements in the functioning and quality of life of participants post-program.

Excellent outcomes

Our outcomes, via Kessler 10 plus PTSD 6 evaluation tools, and the Quest Function Indicator are tracked quarterly for a year.

30% improvement in quantified mental wellbeing 4 weeks after attending a program. This figure increases as participants use education, evidence-based tools/skills for physical and mental health, wellbeing, and resilience.

PTSD statistics

- On average:
- 1 in 10 serving first responders
 - 1 in 4 former first responders
 - 1 in 25 general population

PTSD is the most prevalent health condition reported by emergency service workers.

Holistic health preventative & wellbeing

Tailor-made culturally sensitive workshops for employees.

"This workshop helped me understand my burnout and how I can support myself to be healthy in the workplace."



Benefits of Yoga for Mental Health

YOGA IS AN ANCIENT PRACTICE that brings with it a multitude of health benefits, physical, mental and emotional.

People are drawn to Yoga for many different reasons, but the benefits received through a consistent practice are generally more far-reaching than what initially drew them to the Yoga mat.

Even so, there is still resistance by many to give Yoga a go, perhaps due to preconceived ideas about what Yoga is, and who Yoga is for. But let's be clear, Yoga is for everyone!

We've all seen photos of people in Yoga poses on the internet where they are looking somewhat like a pretzel! This is not what Yoga is about. Images like these do the practice of Yoga a disservice, as people believe they need to be flexible to do Yoga. Whereas the opposite is true. Yoga helps us become more flexible, so stiff bodies on the mat is what it is all about!

Through the practice of Yoga your flexibility will improve over time, which will in turn improve your

general health and wellbeing. Your overall performance in physical activities will improve, you'll most likely experience less pain and discomfort during activities, you'll be less likely to injure yourself, posture and balance will improve, the list really does go on.

Not only will your flexibility improve through Yoga, but Yoga has also been shown to boost muscle strength and endurance, consistency is key.

Beyond strength and flexibility, there are many physical benefits to be found through Yoga, including reduction of chronic inflammation, boosting immunity, improvement of cardiovascular function, improvement of bone density and better sleep.

Where Yoga really shines though is its positive effects on mental health.

Working in the Fire Service brings with it many challenges, most of which are shared by others who also work on the Frontline to protect our community, such as Police, Paramedics, Healthcare workers, SES and Military personnel.

In these professions, people can be exposed to very traumatic events, which can have a lasting impact on their psychological state, leading to PTSD, depression and anxiety.

There are a growing number of studies that are showing that a regular Yoga practice can assist people in the management of these conditions.

Yoga combines the physical practice of the poses (asanas) with breathing exercises, mindfulness, deep relaxation and meditation.

More important than how deep, strong or long you hold a pose, is the quality of your breath. Yoga can include specific breathing exercises, or quite often simply cultivating a good quality, mindful breath as you move through the Yoga poses.

Many people working in Frontline professions find themselves in a state of hypervigilance, which of course can have its place in certain work-related circumstances, where being on high alert is imperative for the safety of oneself and others but can have very negative effects on other



WORKING IN THE FIRE SERVICE BRINGS WITH IT MANY CHALLENGES, MOST OF WHICH ARE SHARED BY OTHERS WHO ALSO WORK ON THE FRONTLINE TO PROTECT OUR COMMUNITY, SUCH AS POLICE, PARAMEDICS, HEALTHCARE WORKERS, SES AND MILITARY PERSONNEL.

aspects of their lives. Never being able to fully relax, and always being on alert is exhausting, and even with this exhaustion, sleep can be hard to find.

Mindful breathing allows the participant to better focus on the present, clearing their mind of thoughts, fears or regrets of the past, and letting go of worries about what may lay ahead. The mind can then become much quieter, bringing with it a sense of more peace, calm and clarity.

Every Yoga class finishes with Savasana. This is where we lay on the floor, eyes closed, with the body completely relaxed. Savasana stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system and calms the sympathetic nervous system. It is in savasana that the real quieting of the mind can begin. Savasana is not easy, and it does take practice. At first there may be many wriggles throughout the body and

many distractions of the mind.

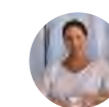
Over time however, the body and the mind will settle more easily. You'll begin to find true stillness deep within, as you let go of everything you've been holding onto, physically, mentally and emotionally.

If you are ready to try Yoga but are perhaps still a little unsure where to start, "Frontline Yoga Inc" is a not for profit organisation throughout Australia, that provides free Yoga classes specifically for Frontline personnel.

These classes are taught with clear instructions and are particularly suitable for people that may be experiencing PTSD, depression and anxiety.

You'll find classes taught in person throughout Australia, and they also

have classes where you can join online. Please visit their website for further details and where you can find a class near you.



Naomi Husain
Yoga Teacher and Studio Owner at Kanti Yoga Pty Ltd
www.kantiyoga.com.au





THE FIRE SERVICES MUSEUM OF VICTORIA

Timothy Hughes, FSM Secretary

SITUATED ON THE CORNER of Victoria Parade and Gisborne Street, East Melbourne, nestled between St Vincent's and the Eye and Ear Hospital, lies a hidden gem of Melbourne, the Fire Services Museum of Victoria.

Housed in the original Headquarters Station of the former Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). The Queen Anne Style building, which

began construction in 1892, completed and began operation as a fire station in 1893, has remained relatively unchanged since the laying of its foundation stone.

The site has overseen some significant changes, first in the 1920's with an extension of the site for workshops and firefighter housing quarters, to the construction of a more modern, brutalist building in 1979 fit for a modern firefighting force.

Upon completion of this new building for the headquarters of the MFB, gave a rare opportunity for the then MFB Historical Society to showcase its rare and unique collection to the public.

THE HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The Fire Services Museum of Victoria traces its origins to a small back room in the former North Melbourne Fire Station where a gathering of MFB personnel came together to form a historical society to preserve the history of the MFB, in 1972.

The collection had already started to be amassed, having been collected from decommissioned buildings, or rescued from fire stations

HISTORY

where old equipment and storage rooms were being cleaned out. These MFB members saw the historical value of these items and ensured their survival.

Originally the collection was stored in various fire stations and private residences across the greater metropolitan area. When the new headquarters fire station was completed in 1979, the collection began to be centralised in its current home.

The Historical Society over time began to evolve too, along with its collection. Originally you had to be a serving member of the MFB to join. However, with ever increasing interest from personnel of other fire services, notably the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the Historical Society changed its name to the Melbourne Fire Museum and amended its charter to allow people from all walks of life to join its ranks.

Finally in mid-1990's the Melbourne Fire Museum became the Fire Services Museum of Victoria, a change in recognition that its collection is no longer Melbourne centric and encompasses all history of the fire services in Victoria.

THE COLLECTION

Our collection in the Museum has just surpassed

15,000 recorded items in our collections database. This includes a vast array of fire fighting uniform items, helmets, documents, vehicles, and unique and rare firefighting related artefacts.

Our collection continues to grow each year, with more and more items being donated by former firefighters, their estates and the fire agencies themselves.

With the founding of Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and the MFB now being dissolved, our collection is entering a new phase of recording the final days of the MFB and the beginning of a new fire agency for Victoria.

Most of our collection is housed in our East Melbourne Museum building. However, we also have our vehicle collection and "overflow" of the general collection at the former Victoria Railways Workshops at Champion Road Newport.

At Newport we have in our collection roughly 65 vehicles in various states of restoration and condition. These range from hand reels and pumps, to the "newest" being a Scania Pumper (which is still over 25 years old).

OUR VOLUNTEERS

The Museum is a fully

HISTORY



volunteer organisation, made up of former and currently serving firefighting personnel.

However, more recently we have accepted into our ranks members who have no fire service backgrounds but share a passion for preservation and dedication to history.

Our members undertake various duties in the Museum, including opening the Museum on our general open days, vehicle restoration and maintenance, collection management and curating, attending special events and functions.

Many of our members from the early days are still with us and the average age of our membership is between 75-85 years old. It is always an eye-opening experience to hear of our members tales of their time in the job and how firefighting was done and how far the fire services have come.

It is a great experience for any visitor to the Museum to be guided by a person who has a wealth of historical knowledge, and it is not uncommon for a tour to take an average of 2-3 hours with visitors captivated of the personal stories and experiences.

THE FUTURE AND BEYOND

In 2022, the Museum celebrated its 50th year of dedication to the preservation of fire service history and memorabilia. We are fortunate enough to have two valuable patrons in the CFA and FRV, who provide invaluable support and assistance.

It is also pleasing to note that both the CFA and FRV are committed to our organisation and support the efforts of the Museum and its volunteers in preserving their respective histories.

Unfortunately, like all volunteer community organisations, volunteers are slowly becoming harder to recruit. Whilst our current membership will persevere and continue its hard work, we always welcome new members, new and old, to join our ranks and continue to hard work of keeping our Museum alive.



Bush Fire Support Service

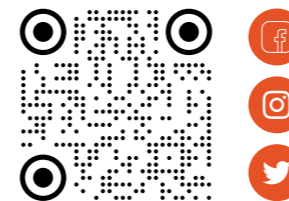
Feeling worried about bush fire season?

Australia's emergency service workers keep our communities safe. Encountering unprecedented levels of stress when responding to crises is part of the job, so it's understandable that you may be feeling stressed or anxious. It's important to note, that mental health challenges following stressful or traumatic events are normal, common and treatable.

The Bush Fire Support Service has been designed to provide free and confidential mental health support for Australia's emergency service workers and their families.

Get help now:

- One-on-one psychological mental health care sessions available free of charge via Telehealth
- Access a quick and confidential mental health assessment to check-in on how you're feeling
- Information and resources on managing your symptoms



Visit blackdoginstitute.org.au or email bushfiresupport@blackdog.org.au

THE MUSEUM OF FIRE

THE MUSEUM OF FIRE, located in Western Sydney NSW, is the largest firefighting museum in the southern hemisphere. Housed in an historic power station the Museum of Fire contains thousands of objects that relate to firefighting history predominantly in New South Wales, but also throughout Australia and the rest of the world.

The museum's history begins with the establishment of the Historic Fire Engine Association of Australia (HFEAA; now known as the Historic Fire Engine Association) who first met in March of 1969. By 1973, the HFEAA was granted special permission to store their growing collection of fire engines at Campbelltown City Council properties.

Owing to their strong association with the Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW (today Fire and Rescue NSW, FRNSW), the HFEAA were invited to utilise a vacant site for the purposes of a museum at the newly constructed Training College at Alexandria in 1979 which became known as the Fire Services Museum.

In 1981 the NSW Fire Service Museum moved to No. 1 Wharf, Walsh Bay however the museum would soon find itself requiring to move again.

The museum made the 1 move to Penrith in 1985, with the collection moving into an historic power station

which had been vacant for 15 years. As a result, a tremendous cleaning and restoration project took place by the community to convert the power station into the perfect museum space. On 16 November 1986, the Museum of Fire was officially opened to the public.

Today our museum exhibits a vast array of exhibitions, traversing the chronological development of the fire brigade in NSW, first beginning with military brigades and insurance brigades before the formal creation of a state instituted fire brigade in 1884 with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB).

In 1910 the MFB renamed to the NSWFB, with a final name change in 2011 to Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) to better reflect the work of firefighters. To showcase the evolution of the fire brigade, our museum hosts around 30 vehicles at any time out of the 80 contained in our collection, displaying the shift from manual pumps to horse drawn steam pumps to motorised pumpers, overall covering an age span from 1841 to the 2000s.

Besides our local developments, our 'Celebrating our Connections with Japan' exhibit showcases international developments in firefighting. In collaboration with Penrith City Council and our sister cities Hakusan and Fujieda we have two firefighting appliances from 1945 and 1976

on display along with a myriad of photographs and historic firefighting uniforms once used by our fellow Japanese firefighters.

Our temporary gallery space allows us to celebrate our relationship with the local community and with our fellow museums. The museum hosts an annual art competition featuring the works of primary school students from across the state, engaging with our local communities to contribute to the narrative of fire safety and the history of firefighting.

The theme for 2022 is Floods: Rescue and Recovery to highlight the important role Fire and Rescue NSW play in promoting community awareness and rescue operations, along with individuals and local community run organisations who play a significant role in the post-flood recovery. This theme was chosen due to the devastating floods that the east coast of Australia has endured over the last few years.

The Museum prides itself on being a centre for education to teach the community about fire safety. Our education programs delivered to primary aged students informs them on the role and work of firefighters,



how to safely evacuate your home in an emergency, the environmental impacts of bushfires and how to ensure you are bushfire ready.

To further engage with children in the community we have a dedicated Junior Firefighters Zone where they can interact with games on the Fire Brigade Kids website to help them learn about fire safety, along with puzzles, videos, and dismantled fire engine cabins that they can climb in to pretend to be a firefighter.

The Museum of Fire is an excellent place to learn about the history of firefighting, whilst simultaneously educating the public on safe practices and appropriate preparations in case of a fire emergency.

We are open 7 days a week 9:30am – 4:30pm located at 1 Museum Drive, Penrith NSW.

Museum of Fire, Sydney NSW

<https://www.museumoffire.net/>



@MuseumOffire



@mof_sydney



@MoF_Sydney

Open 7 days 9:30am - 4:30pm

Step inside the Museum of Fire and you will find yourself immersed in the intriguing world of fire and firefighting.



museumoffire.net