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AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE OFFICERS HAVE ELEVATED RATES OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, DEPRESSION AND SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

MEDIA STATEMENT

World Mental Health Day is a reminder for us all to acknowledge the prevalence of mental health injuries confronted by members of the Australian Federal Police.

AFPA President, Angela Smith, said policing is undoubtedly a stressful and demanding occupation, with officers routinely exposed to traumatic situations, which can cause life-long psychological injuries and increased levels of stress triggering depression and anxiety.

"Every day they are exposed to seeing, hearing and doing things that many of us wouldn't imagine anyone having to experience. That's why it's so important they get the care and support they need.

"Typically, with the right workplace support and professional help, mental health difficulties can be minimised, no matter how big the problem seems or how bleak the future appears."

In a recent submission to the Senate Inquiry into the mental health conditions experienced by first responders, the AFPA presented recommendations for the AFP to help improve the way it manages the mental health of its employees. The recommendations were drawn from stories, feedback and experiences of current and former AFP members.

In developing the recommendations, four themes were identified which the AFPA believes will underpin real change. These include reducing stigma around reporting of mental health conditions, police specific occupational mental health support and treatments services, streamlined workers compensation arrangements and changes to workplace culture and management practices.

"The AFP has been too slow in responding to the mental health needs of AFP employees and they really need to make this a higher priority. There are too many people falling through the cracks.

"It's time to stop underplaying the damage that policing does to the men and women who do this job."

A copy of the AFPA's submission can be found at <https://www.afpa.org.au/resources/senate-inquiry-into-the-mental-health-of-first-responders/>

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