

# Fostering Connectedness and Resilience through Physical Health and Wellbeing Activities: The Ripple Effect

## Understanding the Need

First responders are exposed to a broad range of operational and organisational stressors.



**1 in 3** first responders experience **high levels of psychological distress**.



**1 in 10** first responders develop **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**.



**Social isolation** increases **risk of mental illness**



Over **2/3** of first responders **resisted seeking support** due to the stigma



First responders carry **73% greater mortality risk**



## 5 Ways to Wellbeing

Based on international research about the modifiable determinants of wellbeing.



CONNECT



BE ACTIVE



KEEP LEARNING



BE AWARE



HELP OTHERS

**WELLBEING ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO ENHANCE BOTH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION**

Building family and team resilience through the primary lever of social connection. Activities include exercise programs, yoga, kayaking, walk/ run groups, rock climbing, surfing, bushwalking and more.

## The Ripple Effect of Fostering Connection and Resilience



Data Source: Preliminary qualitative and quantitative data from a sample of 975 participants in wellbeing Programs organised by Fortem Australia, collected via routine quality assurance monitoring.

**“Positive social support and physical activity are two ways to increase resilience and ward off trauma psychopathology and enhance protective factors!”**

- Lowery & Cassidy (2022)



## Key Take Home Message

### Combined Social & Physical Movement Activities

- Whole-person orientated
- Family & community-focused
- Physical activity
- Social engagement



### Enhanced Wellbeing & Protective Factors

- Promotes **social connection**
- Develops **skills and strategies** to maintain physical health and wellbeing
- Builds **resilience** in first responders and their communities
- **Protects** against the negative effects of work-related stress



### Wellbeing Participant Feedback:

*“What a wonderful running group. I am so grateful for the support everyone gave me to keep me showing up and running. This was a big step out of my comfort zone and I found this group helped improve my fitness, confidence and ability to connect with others.”*

