



**Fortem Australia
Annual Report
2023-24**



Fortem Australia acknowledges First Nations peoples and communities as the Traditional Owners of the land. We acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders past and present, and emerging leaders.



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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present Fortem Australia's Annual Report for the 2023–2024 financial year, a celebration of the exceptional work and unwavering commitment of our organisation to support Australia's first responders and their families.

Each day, first responders across the country serve with remarkable dedication, often facing complex and demanding situations that require extraordinary resilience. The demands of these roles extend far beyond the immediate, impacting not only the individuals who serve but also their loved ones. Recognising these unique challenges, Fortem exists to provide vital support through preventative and early intervention social connection initiatives, psychology care, career management, and mental health literacy programs tailored specifically to the needs of first responders and their families.



Over the past year, Fortem has made exceptional strides in enhancing these essential services, ensuring that we meet the evolving needs of those on the front lines. Through our work, we continue to strengthen the wellbeing and resilience of first responders and their families, making a profound difference in their lives and in the communities they protect.

On behalf of the board, I extend my deepest gratitude to the Fortem team for their outstanding efforts, as well as to our partners and supporters who make this work possible. As we look to the future, we remain committed to empowering our first responders and their families with the resources they need to thrive, no matter the challenges they face.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Graham Ashton'.

Graham Ashton AM APM

Board Chair

Fortem Australia

A message from the CEO

I commenced with Fortem following the completion of the 2023–24 financial year, and it has been wonderful to reflect on all that has been achieved. As Australia’s leading not-for-profit organisation supporting the mental health and wellbeing of first responders and their families, our work is focused on building resilience through early intervention, which in turn helps build the resilience of our first responder agencies and the communities they serve.



As a former police officer, I know how rewarding being a first responder is, but I also understand it can be incredibly challenging, for both first responders and their families. We know first responders experience higher rates of psychological distress, mental health diagnoses and suicidal thoughts than the rest of the community, and that families are also impacted. That’s why we focus on early intervention and preventative mental health support via a range of social, clinical, career management and mental health literacy offerings. I also understand the unique challenges that come with transitioning out of a first responder career. Fortem’s Career Management Program has been instrumental in empowering first responders to transition with dignity into the next phase of their professional lives, while also supporting those who choose to remain with their agency after participating in the program.

Of course, Fortem’s success in assisting first responders and their families is only possible thanks to the generous funding provided by the Australian Government’s National Emergency Management Agency, together with government grants, funding partnerships and donations from the community. We are incredibly grateful for this support and extend our thanks to all our supporters.

In 2024–25, Fortem will continue to deliver and grow our services for first responders and their families. We will continue to grow our brand, so first responders know we are here to support them, and we will continue to gain and maintain the trust and confidence of our stakeholders, including first responder agencies.

To the team at Fortem Australia, thank you for all you do for first responders. Your work makes a difference in the lives of many. And to the current and former first responders right across Australia, together with your families, thank you for your service.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Willing', written over a faint, light blue rectangular background.

Michael Willing APM

Chief Executive Officer

Fortem Australia



Introducing Fortem Australia

History

Established in 2019, Fortem Australia was founded to provide mental health and wellbeing support to national security agencies under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002*. Initially focusing on social connection and wellbeing activities, Fortem expanded its services following the 2019–2020 Black Summer bushfires. This expansion included clinical support and career management, extending support to all first responders and their families.

Recognising the critical need, Fortem received funding from Commonwealth agencies, now part of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the importance of Fortem's services, prompting adaptations to maintain social connection during periods of isolation.

Fortem continues to collaborate with first responder agencies, NEMA and government partners to equip emergency service workers with resilience tools. Demand has grown due to natural disasters and critical events. Our mission is to support the wellbeing of first responders and their families.

Our values

Everything that we do is underpinned by our three core values. These values shape the way we work as we pursue our mission to support the wellbeing of first responders and their families.

Courage: To have the courage and resilience to live our values, speak honestly, be respectful, and demonstrate this through our behaviours and interactions with others.

Collective impact: To be committed to the organisation's purpose, acknowledge our challenges, build on our strengths, and collaborate across portfolios to achieve one goal: support the mental health and wellbeing of first responders and their families.

Accountability and outcome focused: To accept responsibility for your role, make informed and considered decisions, be open and proactive in seeking new opportunities by having a growth mindset, provide constructive feedback, and embrace change with resilience.



Our services

Fortem is Australia's leading and most trusted national service dedicated exclusively to first responders and their families. Since securing a competitive Commonwealth tender to provide mental health resilience support following the Black Summer bushfires, Fortem has expanded its presence to deliver essential on-the-ground social connection, wellbeing, early intervention, and preventative mental health strategies. These efforts ensure first responders receive vital support to enhance their resilience and continue protecting Australia.

Fortem operates through three interconnected branches, all under a preventative and early intervention framework:

Social connection and wellbeing activities: Fortem Australia offers a range of wellbeing activities designed to support the mental fitness of first responders and their families. Grounded in the latest scientific research, these activities aim to enhance participants' resilience, confidence, and ability to manage stress effectively. By fostering trust in their own capabilities, Fortem empowers attendees to adapt to new challenges with optimism, promoting positive wellbeing outcomes.

Psychology and counselling: Fortem Australia provides specialised psychology and counselling services tailored to the unique challenges faced by first responders and their families. Our qualified and experienced clinicians are dedicated to addressing the psychological impacts of first responder work with empathy and expertise.

Career management services: At Fortem, we recognise that each first responder's career journey is unique. Our confidential career management services are tailored to support individuals in navigating the next stages of their careers and lives, available to eligible first responder agencies. Our career resilience support offers a variety of resources and services aimed at enhancing career resilience, engagement, and overall wellbeing.

Proven results

To date, Fortem has:

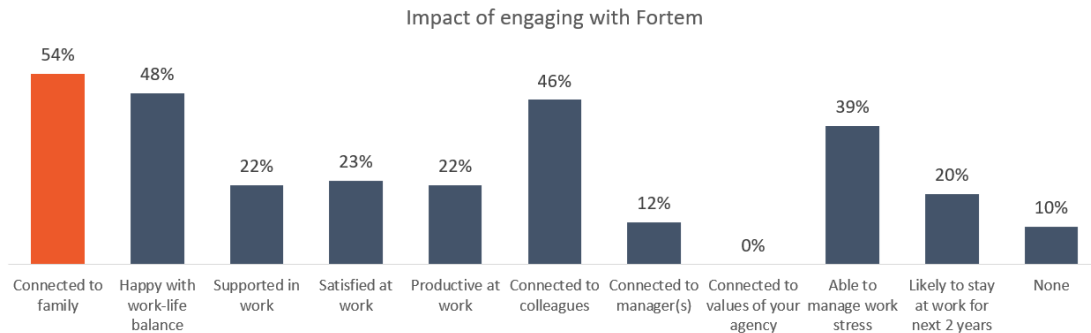
- reached over 74,730 first responders and their families through wellbeing activity registrations and community engagements with an overall community reach of more than 132,000 people
- provided 8,243 psychology and counselling sessions
- received 3,590 career management referrals
- supported 1,610 individuals through career management services.

These accomplishments underscore Fortem's ability to deliver effective and scalable support tailored to the unique needs of the first responder community.



Our impact

1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024



Social connection

Fortem’s social connection initiatives enhance resilience and build networks of safety and support and included;

- 607 engagement activities provided social connection and wellbeing activities, training workshops and community engagements for first responders and their families
- 58,603 people were reached during Fortem community engagements
- 97% of participants felt that Fortem’s social connection initiatives benefited health and wellbeing.

Psychology and counselling

Fortem delivered 2,928 psychology sessions which are evidence-based, culturally-informed and confidential. Participants reported substantial improvements in:

- resilience
- workplace stressors
- home stressors

helping to enhance their overall psychological wellbeing.

Career Management Program

Our Career Management Program helps build career resilience, preserving careers and reducing retraining costs, as well as facilitating dignified career transitions and post-service life.

- 541 participants.
- 1,200 leads.
- 100% of participants said they were more confident in their capacity for work.





Social connection and wellbeing activities

From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, Fortem delivered 607 engagement opportunities to first responders and their families. Together with community engagement activities, Fortem reached over 58,000 individuals. This year represents a milestone in our outreach, highlighting the growing impact of our programs and the increasing need for mental health and wellbeing support within the first responder community.

Geographical reach

Fortem continues to extend its national footprint, offering a variety of wellbeing activities across Australia designed to support first responders and their families in fostering resilience and mental wellness. In-person events are hosted in the following locations:

- Queensland: Including disaster-prone areas like Darling Downs, Townsville, Gold Coast, Logan, Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, and Scenic Rim Region.
- New South Wales: Northern Rivers, Port Macquarie, Greater Sydney, Wollongong, Bega Valley, Southern Tablelands, and Monaro regions.
- Australian Capital Territory: Canberra.
- Victoria: Melbourne and Gippsland.
- Northern Territory: Darwin and Alice Springs.
- Western Australia: Perth, Yanchep, Mandurah, and Bunbury Southwest region.

A range of virtual activities are available nationwide, serving participants in all states and territories - including South Australia, Tasmania, and regional and remote communities. Diverse activities include cooking, art classes, fitness challenges, and more. These offerings foster connection and community among first responders, especially those in remote areas who might otherwise feel isolated.

A calendar of wellbeing activities is available on Fortem's website, where participants can find and register for events in their area.



Highlights of social connection and wellbeing activities

This year's wellbeing activities ranged from large family gatherings to intimate coffee catch-ups, nature-based events, fitness challenges, skill-building workshops, walking groups, and trail hikes. Through these programs, Fortem creates meaningful social connections and a supportive environment where first responders and their families can recharge and build lasting resilience.



Participant feedback

"Attending this event with my partner was a delightful way to reconnect with him. We experienced a beautiful night out because of Fortem and as a result had a whole evening of fun and opportunity to connect in our relationship. I left that night feeling happy, balanced and calm - all of which have helped to balance my mental health.... A very timely thing to occur for me."

"I'm incredibly thankful to Fortem for giving my family and me the chance to experience this. It was truly amazing to immerse ourselves in the art and see our city in such a different light. During the walk, I had engaging conversations with colleagues whom I rarely get to talk to in a workplace setting. These conversations helped humanise them and will undoubtedly improve our communication in the future. Thank you for helping us create these wonderful memories."

"It's a great way to de-stress whilst enjoying time with the kids and other emergency services. Good to be able to connect in a safe zone. Thanks for the awesome experience."

"Was a lovely way for the family of first responders to have an activity to connect with each other in a family friendly environment."

"Extremely enjoyable activity, helped with my fitness running around after each other. The children will hold this fun memory of beating the adults for a while. It's great to see how these activities connect families with other families - we are off for lunch now with another family we met. Thank you!"



"It was such a fun day at Australia Zoo. To be able to spend the day with my family doing a really enjoyable activity was a great help to my mental health. I had gone to some terrible jobs leading up to it and this activity really helped with my mental health. (The community engagement coordinator) was so welcoming, he chatted to us about what Fortem is about and provided us with a great insight on how Fortem can help first responders. Very grateful for his knowledge and information and very much appreciate him taking the time to explain a first responders options when looking for alternatives. Thank you!!"



"In the short term it gave me something to do with both Colleagues and our children. In the long term it has opened my eyes to Fortem and what they have available."

"I had a wonderful time. I connected with my 18-year-old son again and my husband who suffers from PTSD [not diagnosed though], it was just what we needed. I will continue to advocate for Fortem Australia. I will be reading some of your online resources that i was advised about on this evening and definitely take time out to attend more functions put on by Fortem."



"I have been off work for a while now with PTSD, depression etc. At times I do not feel like being social or seeing people so booking something like this in helps me reconnect with my kids and also see work colleagues."

"It's so nice to have something to give back to my family. They have had to sacrifice a lot of things so I can help others. So lovely to have time with them and have their contribution recognised. So grateful, an amazingly wonderful day. Thank you."



"Each year for the past three years we have been fortunate enough to receive tickets for our whole family. With both of us being first responders our kids are very used to life/plans changing in the blink of an eye. Each year this is a way for us to thank our kids for the sacrifices they give when we go to help the community."

"As an Auxiliary Firefighter, we are on call 24/7. On Saturday night I was celebrating my wife's 42nd birthday with family and friends being about 50 people. During this event I received a firecall for a house fire. I was gone for hours and missed my wife's birthday and catching up with family and friends.

The timing of this event was so perfect. It allowed me to thank my family for supporting me. For all the times I would run out during dinner, family time and time with my wife. We had an amazing day, and the video Fortem put on for first responders made me realise for the first time of just how important it is the job we do. It brought a tear to me eyes.

Thanks Fortem and Australia Zoo for such an amazing event that gave me quality family time that made memories that will last for a very long time."

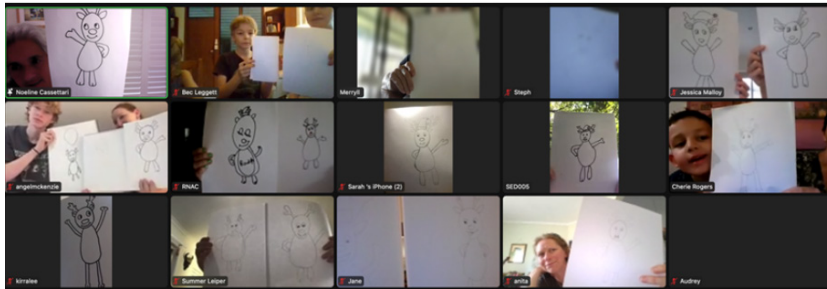


Expansion and outreach

Virtual

Fortem Australia's expansion of its virtual wellbeing program is a significant step in making mental health support more accessible to first responders and family members in regional and remote areas. This initiative aligns with Fortem's commitment to nurturing resilience, strengthening bonds, and optimising health among first responders and their families, with a focus on ensuring first responders do not feel isolated due to their geographical location.

The program offers a range of activities and resources and supports, designed to enhance community wellbeing and resilience.



Volunteers

Volunteers aid in expanding services to regional areas by helping establish local networks and coordinating local programs. Their advocacy and promotional efforts also attract more participants to engage resources, enhancing the overall reach and impact of Fortem's initiatives.

During this period, Fortem has utilised the support of various volunteers who have contributed to engagements across the country. These volunteers have also expanded our support into a number of new locations, including:

- Riverina Region, NSW
- Darling Downs Region, QLD
- Wide Bay Region, QLD
- Alice Springs, NT
- Mandurah, WA.

Program outcomes

Fortem's value to participants is reflected in the positive outcomes reported through their annual and post-activity surveys. The surveys highlight a significant impact on participants' personal and professional lives, with improvements in family connections, work-life balance, colleague relationships, and stress management.

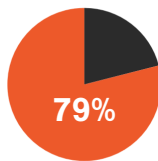
The data indicates that a majority of participants experience benefits to their mental health and wellbeing, with 89% acknowledging the activities' positive effects.

Additionally, there is a notable enhancement in social connections and a strengthened social network, as reported by 65% and 79% of participants, respectively. Furthermore, the surveys reveal that one in six participants proactively seek further early intervention supports offered by Fortem, suggesting a proactive approach to personal wellbeing. This consistent feedback underscores the value Fortem provides to its participants, fostering a supportive community and promoting overall wellbeing.

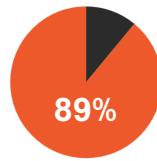
Fortem is committed to monitoring and responding to participant feedback through these surveys for our continuous improvement and participant care.

Overview of highest reported responses were:

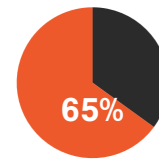
- increased connection to family
- happier with work life balance
- increased connection to colleagues
- ability to manage work stress.



79% reported a strengthened social network.



89% of participants felt the activity benefited their mental health and wellbeing.



65% reported enhanced social connection.



1 in 6 wellbeing participants seek other early intervention supports through Fortem.

Collaborating with the Commonwealth and the New South Wales Government, Fortem has commenced a new initiative to enhance mental health awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding help-seeking for first responders and their families. This initiative aims to foster proactive health-related behaviours through preventative and early intervention support services.

By improving the accessibility, appropriateness, and effectiveness of these services, we will strengthen mental health outcomes, social connections, mental health literacy, overall wellbeing, career retention, and career transition within the first responder community. As a result, first responders and their families will be encouraged by Fortem's best possible care and supportive environment that encourages seeking help and maintaining mental health proactively.

Clinical services

Fortem's clinical services provide comprehensive and accessible mental health support to eligible first responders and their families through individual, couples, and family therapy. Our proactive, resilience-building approach prioritises early intervention and long-term wellbeing, ensuring the sustainability of the first responder workforce.

Our clinical team's extensive experience allows for tailored support that addresses the unique challenges faced by first responders. Services are primarily delivered via telehealth, with some in-person options, including animal-assisted therapy – a distinctive approach that utilises a certified clinician and therapy dog team to enhance emotional wellbeing.



Roy is a certified therapy dog who works with his handler to provide animal-assisted therapy.

During the 2023–24 financial year, Fortem delivered 2,928 evidence-based intervention sessions, with 8.5% of these dedicated to couples and families. Factoring in appointments impacted by shift demands, a total of 3,804 sessions were scheduled, supporting 439 individuals.

Additionally, Fortem introduced an eight-week, in-person mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) program, aimed at providing tools for managing stress and developing adaptive responses. While this program was paused due to changes in service delivery, it remains a key component of Fortem's therapeutic model.

Referral pattern and demand trends

Fortem's clinical services received 266 referrals from 29 first responder agencies. An increase in referrals from Queensland agencies in late 2023 likely reflects a heightened need for support following significant and overlapping disaster events. With rising demand for couples therapy, Fortem responded by enhancing staff expertise and hiring a relationship and family counsellor, which allowed us to provide comprehensive support for families during stressful periods.

Capacity management and client experience

Average wait times remained within or exceeded industry standards. Unique to Fortem, clients awaiting clinician assignment received optional waitlist support, consistently yielding positive feedback from participants.

Common issues presented at intake included stress, anxiety, relationship challenges, and depression.

Fortem’s tailored approach helps first responders effectively address these challenges, enabling them to remain in the workforce without the need for prolonged compensation claims or early exits. By recognising the interconnectedness of workplace and personal stressors, Fortem’s services are tailored to meet the specific needs of the first responder community, distinguishing it from other providers and enabling comprehensive support for first responder families.

Program outcomes and impact measurement

Fortem collects comprehensive resilience data, assessing psychological distress, symptom severity, social support, alcohol use, help-seeking behaviours, and overall resilience using validated scales. These include the International Trauma Questionnaire (ITQ), the Brief 2-Way Social Support Scale (Brief 2-Way SSS), the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), the Personal Wellbeing Index for Adults (PWI-A), and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-2). Couples completed the Enhanced Gottman Relationship Checkup assessment, a comprehensive online clinical tool that evaluates their strengths and challenges, while youth completed the K10+, CD-RISC-2, Brief 2-Way SSS, and ITQ-CA.

In choosing these measures, care was taken to balance the need for comprehensive data collection in key areas of impact to effectively inform individual care plans, while also minimising the burden for participants. The measures were also selected to benchmark with those used in population-level research on first responders in Australia.

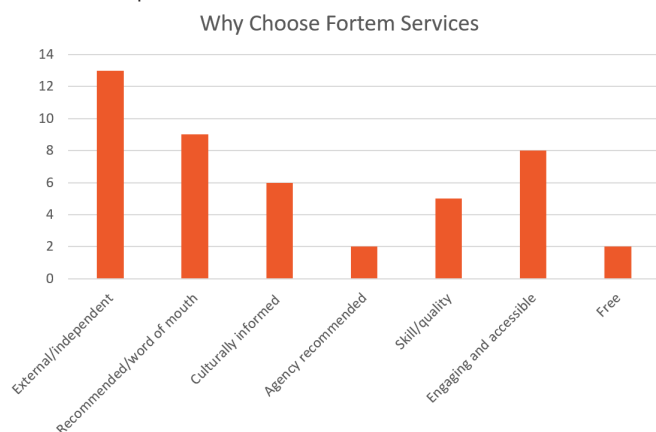
Fortem’s clinical services have resulted in measurable improvements across various psychometric measures. This included improvements across all domains in the PWI results, indicating an enhanced perception of life satisfaction and wellbeing post treatment.

The Brief 2-way SSS results indicated an increase of participants’ perceived sense of both receiving and providing emotional and instrumental support following treatment.

A significant decrease in measurable PTSD symptoms was observed among Fortem’s clinical services post-treatment clients through the ITQ results.

Feedback from Fortem’s Clinical Feedback Form consistently highlighted the team’s expert understanding of the unique needs of first responders. These insights are invaluable for continuously enhancing the quality of clinical services provided.

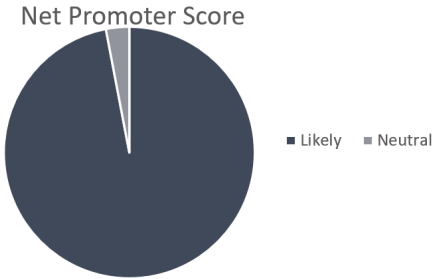
The 2024 Annual Engagement Survey provided further insights into Fortem’s clinical service delivery. The outcome relating to engagement in clinical services indicated independence from their agency as a primary factor in selecting Fortem to engage with, followed by 28% indicating that word of mouth recommendation had played a role in their engagement.



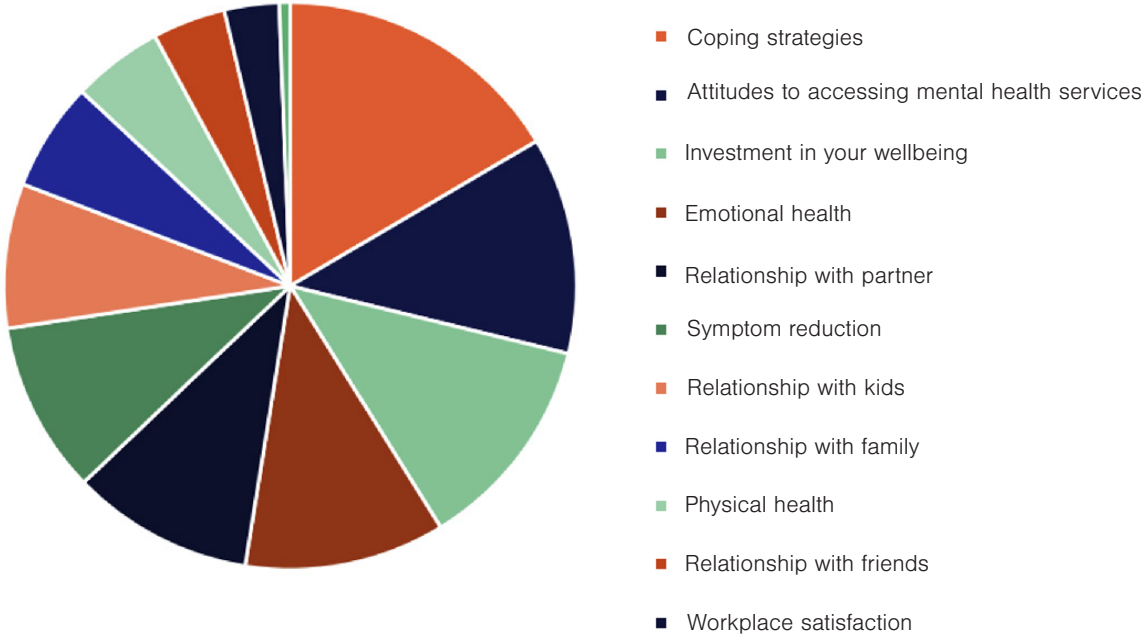
Participant perception of being understood was rated highly. Overall, 95% felt understood by intake officers, and 93% felt understood by care-coordinator and psychologists/counsellors. Overall, 90% of respondents felt that Fortem staff understood first responder culture.

Most respondents who engaged with clinical services were very likely to recommend Fortem to a friend or colleague.

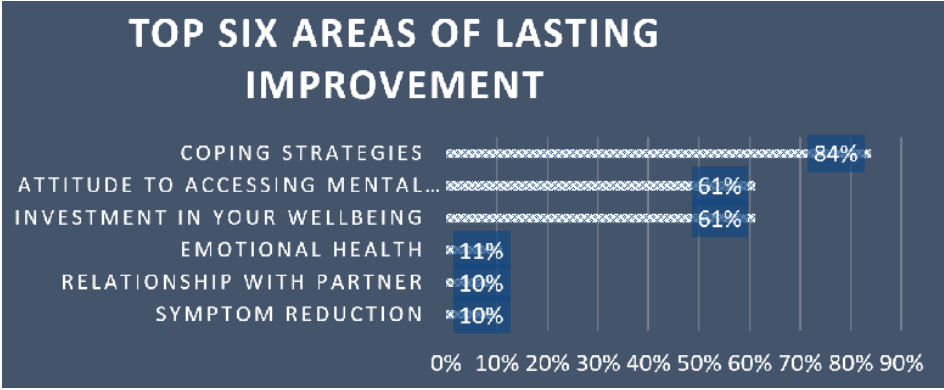
How likely are participants to recommend Fortem?



Respondents to the survey indicated that they all had received a lasting positive impact from engaging with Fortem’s clinical service. 84% of participants that engaged in clinical services indicated they had obtained lasting coping strategies for their mental health needs. 61% of respondents indicated that by engaging with the service their attitude towards accessing mental health services had a lasting positive impact and their investment in their own wellbeing had also had a lasting positive impact.



Rounding out the top six positive impacts were improvements in emotional health, relationship with their partner and a reduction of symptomatology.



Career Management Program

Fortem's Career Management Program (CMP) commenced in mid-2021 with funding from a Commonwealth Government grant under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002*. It was designed to assist eligible first responders in their transition out of service due to medical reasons, age retirement, or voluntary resignation. Although the initial funding has concluded, the program has continued to adapt and expand to meet the evolving needs of first responders. Our dedicated team comprises skilled professionals with lived experiences as first responders or significant experience working alongside them.

During the 2023–24 financial year, the CMP fielded enquiries from 1,200 first responders across 18 agencies nationwide, of which 541 completed the formal intake process and officially joined the program. Fortem worked closely with these first responders to develop a tailored transition plan for each individual. Participants benefited from personalised support through a one-on-one case management model, facilitated by career management specialists. Key services include resume and career writing coaching, interview skills training through both individual coaching and group workshops, mock interviews to build confidence, comprehensive career analysis assessments to identify suitable options based on individual characteristics and values, and recognition of prior learning (RPL) and skill assessments in partnership with industry leaders to align work history and education with formal qualifications. Additionally, participants engaged in monthly training and professional development workshops designed to enhance their employability.

While the CMP primarily focuses on transition support, 59 participants (10.9%) chose to re-engage with their agencies and continue their first responder careers after reflecting on their paths during case management meetings. Fortem Australia is committed to supporting all first responders, whether they decide to transition or remain in service.

Over the past two years, the CMP has launched a dedicated client portal, featuring a wealth of resources tailored to the needs of first responders. This portal offers job skills training, resilience resources, career planning tools, wellbeing support, and transition assistance, with over 200 clients accessing it regularly. Monthly updates ensure the content remains current and relevant, covering critical topics like resume writing and interview preparation. The portal also hosts a live job board, connecting participants with employers actively seeking first responder applicants across each state and territory.

In 2023–24, the CMP's training and development strategy encompassed a diverse range of career transition workshops aimed at enhancing participants' employability and job application skills. Notable offerings included resume development, interview skills, government job applications, and effective use of LinkedIn. This strategy proved highly effective, achieving 519 registrations across various workshops.

The success of career transition extends beyond merely securing employment; it represents a deeply personal journey. In 2023–24, participants achieved a variety of significant outcomes: 63 participants actively pursued their goals within the program, 352 completed case management support and applied for jobs, 150 secured new employment, 59 re-engaged with their agencies, and 104 completed the program, opting for alternative paths such as education, volunteering, or self-employment. Notable success stories include former police officers who secured positions as compliance managers, investigators, school groundsmen, and QHSE advisors, illustrating the program’s impactful role in career transitions.

Feedback from participants underscores the profound effect of the CMP on their lives. Many expressed heartfelt gratitude and highlighted the transformation they experienced:

“I would like to thank you and Fortem for all your help. It gave me the confidence that I could secure employment away from my agency.” Another participant shared, “I have started to believe in myself again.”

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart – everything you and the Fortem team provided me was extremely valuable. You were so generous with your time and made me feel more confident about my options and the transferability of my skillset.”

“Your program has worked!” Another stated, “Thank you so much for your support, advice, and encouragement. It’s hard to describe how helpful this was. I can’t thank each of you and Fortem enough. Great people working for a great organisation.”

“I am not sure what I would have done without you or Fortem during the past several months. Transitioning from a long-time role to a different career path can be a lonely and scary journey. Your positive words and support really helped me to take the leap.”

Beyond employment, many participants reported improved work-life balance and a renewed enthusiasm for their careers, contributing to their overall confidence and resilience. The CMP has collaborated with various external stakeholders, including Churchill Education and the College of Law Education and Training, to facilitate RPL and skill assessments. Additionally, career writing services such as My Dream Careers, MCV Careers, and DocuMateAU have provided vital expertise, equipping participants to navigate job opportunities more effectively.

Fortem’s Career Management Program has successfully empowered first responders to transition with dignity into the next phase of their professional lives. Participants have gained confidence, resilience, and self-worth, enabling them to approach their transition journeys with enthusiasm and optimism.



Agency engagement

Examples of agency engagement

Over the 2023–24 financial year, Fortem’s engagement with first responder agencies has significantly evolved, marked by a strengthened collaboration and an expanded scope of support services.

Collaborating with agencies, Fortem organised station visits, presentations and in-agency social connection supports, creating a platform for open dialogue, education, and awareness around mental health and wellbeing. These activities not only provide valuable information but also foster a sense of community and support among peers. The emphasis on social connection and prioritising personal health is crucial, as it can lead to improved resilience, reduced stigma, and a better understanding of how to manage stress and trauma related to their challenging roles. Such programs are instrumental in promoting a culture of care within high-pressure work environments.

Some of the agency engagements conducted across this financial year included:

Darwin official launch event

The Darwin team was officially launched on 19 September 2023. Keynote Speaker Luke Gosling OAM MP spoke about the importance of creating an ecosystem of support for our first responders and the essential role Fortem plays in community. Other guests included Mrs Lia Finocchiaro MLA, Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Mark Turner, Member for Blain; Northern Territory Police and Fire and Emergency Services, along with local first responder families, agency stakeholders, and community organisations such as Standby and Mates for Mates.



Backing the Frontline presentation

In March 2024, Fortem Australia conducted the 'Backing the Frontline' presentation in the Townsville region. This followed the impact of Cyclone Kirrily in January 2024, which saw first responders from across the region involved in the preparation, management, and recovery efforts, supported by additional personnel from across the state to aid the North Queensland community.

Approximately 60 first responders, including leadership members from various agencies and the wider community attended the presentation. The event focused on disaster recovery and emphasised the importance of self-reflection, identifying signs of exhaustion and burnout, maintaining work-life balance, managing stress, recognising triggers, and employing recovery methods. Additionally, the presentation highlighted the significance of wellbeing and social connection.



Fortem provided practical information and advice to help first responders and their families recover from stressful and traumatic events, as well as strategies to ensure their future wellbeing. In collaboration with the agencies, Fortem also highlighted various support options available to first responder families, emphasising the importance of seeking early intervention support if needed.

Feedback from attendees

What did you learn from the presentation?

"Some of the signs of stress, I would really like to be able to get some of the presentation material so I can speak to it at my staff meetings."

"There is no stigma attached to the feelings that a first responder will experience when confronted with the horrific scenes they deal with on a daily basis. help is available."

"Regularly ground yourself and surround yourself with family and friends."

"Reconnection."

"It confirmed for me that many of the same stressors that affect Defence Veterans after their service, also affect emergency Service workers. Both full time and volunteers. Also, that many of the wellbeing strategies used to help people deal with these stressors are the same."

Do you believe Fortems services are vital?

“Yes, another option to build resilience and network.”

“Yes - having used Fortem previously, I found they were most responsive to me in a time of ‘crisis’. Internal services are simply no match for what Fortem can offer. There is more trust in an external organisation over internal avenues.”

“Yes. Because there is an increasing cohort of our volunteers that are currently serving, or previously served in Emergency Services.”

“Absolutely. Mental health is an ever-changing thing that requires support sometimes.”

“Yes, they offer insight that we don’t get through our normal channels and the offers of different functions to mix with other people is something we have never experienced before.”

“A well-received presentation, my peers haven’t stopped bragging about it for 2 days.”

“This is so relevant to our current climate - our community relies on front line services more than ever. The community resilience needs rebuilding and frontline services bear the brunt of this, with little regard for their own welfare.

I’m so happy to see Fortem expand over the years.”

9/11 Commemorative Games

Fortem collaborated with members and volunteers of the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire Department and the State Emergency Services for the annual commemorative games in Brisbane on 10 September 2023.

Over 2,000 first responders and their families attended the event to take part in or watch 10 different sporting activities. The games bring first responders together to honour their service, acknowledge the challenges they face and pay respects to all members who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Fortem engaged with attendees to share information about support options, provide connection opportunities, increase mental health literacy and enhance resilience.



R U OK? Day 2023

Fortem supported the Department of Fire & Emergency Services (DFES) with their R U OK? Day event by organising for Rapid Relief Team to provide lunch for attendees. DFES HQ in Cockburn was attended by over 150 personnel with the live-streamed event bringing together dedicated members of the emergency services family from all corners of WA to deepen their awareness of mental health. Fortem was able to engage with all levels of DFES.



“One final thank you for being part of R U OK? DAY 2023, It was a brilliant event with a great turnout. I can’t express my gratitude enough to the three of you for really making the event what it was, you were spectacular.”

Emily Pestell - DFES

Advisory Board engagement

Throughout the 2023–24 financial year, Fortem held four Advisory Board meetings, leveraging the expertise of executive leaders from the first responder sector. These leaders provide volunteer support and essential counsel, ensuring that Fortem’s programs align with current best practices and address the real challenges faced by first responders.

The Advisory Board’s involvement is pivotal in shaping practical and effective solutions through a collaborative approach, enhancing the relevance and impact of Fortem’s preventative and early intervention strategies. Their advocacy for these programs promotes broader community awareness and adoption, strengthening trust and credibility within the sector.

By working closely with Fortem, the Advisory Board plays a crucial role in tailoring initiatives to the unique needs of first responder groups, directly contributing to improved mental health and resilience. Their insights help refine strategies that provide comprehensive and effective support, fostering a resilient and well-supported workforce capable of withstanding the demands of their roles.

Community and stakeholder engagement

Thank a First Responder Day

Fortem spearheads a national day of action each June known as Thank a First Responder Day (TAFRD). This initiative acknowledges the vital work of first responders and connects them with expressions of gratitude from the community. It is a day to celebrate first responders through various events and activities that occur on the day and throughout the surrounding weeks.

The purpose of Thank a First Responder Day 2024 was to highlight the crucial role first responders play in our communities and to foster a culture of appreciation and support. This initiative aimed to not only thank first responders but also to raise awareness of their contributions and the importance of their wellbeing.

Throughout June, Fortem Australia led 33 TAFRD initiatives nationally, reaching tens of thousands of people, and collecting countless community messages of gratitude and support for Australia's first responders. These events included community gatherings, school engagements, and public acknowledgments, all aimed at honouring the dedication of first responders.



Messages of feedback and thanks

"Being thanked as a first responder is a humbling experience. These moments of appreciation fuel our commitment to protect our community."

"I am a member of our local RFS and my husband is the Captain. Coming off the back of Dunns Road fire all these year later and knowing how important our services (police, rfs, nsw fire, paramedics, doctors ect) were during this time as well as their importance daily in general, it's nice to see an initiative like this."

School involvement in TAFRD 2024

An initiative of Thank A First Responder Day 2024 was to reach out to local schools, raising awareness among younger members of the community about the critical roles first responders play, while also fostering a culture of gratitude and respect for their services.

Engaging schools in such activities can have a ripple effect, as students may carry the message home, further spreading the importance of acknowledging the dedication and hard work of first responders. Such community-driven initiatives are vital in building strong, supportive relationships between the public and emergency service personnel.



"What an amazing vibe today was for our first Thank a First Responder day. We were very Lucky to have some special visitors to make the day even more special. We hope you enjoy a small snippet of our expression of Thanks for all that you do in the community. We hope you all had an amazing day."

"To our first responders!! From the bottom of our hearts, and from everyone here at Roseberry House, THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO FOR OUR COMMUNITY!"

"The video attached is of the beautiful children here at Roseberry House ELC Bentleigh and wonderful educators giving gratitude and thanks to you, our first responders for 'Thank a First Responder Day' which is today!"

What a great initiative by everyone involved!"



Community engagement for TAFRD 2024

On 7 June 2024 Fortem were invited to attend the Country Bank Stadium in North Queensland as a community corner partner. The engagement provided a platform to interact with the community about first responder health and wellbeing and Thank A First Responder Day.

Fortem were invited to interact with all attendees and address the stadium crowd of 20,000 community members.

The engagement also included representatives of all state first responder agencies receiving a rapturous applause of appreciation as they formed a guard of honour for the NRL athletes entering the field.



"I had the honour of speaking with a group of ladies today at the stadium who were impacted by the 2019 floods. Their family and their friends lost all their belongings in the floods. They told me they called the SES who responded to their call for help. The SES crew were able to sandbag their property, tarp their roof and help them to safety which they were extremely grateful for.

"They gave a heartfelt thank you to all SES crews and first responders. They said without their help they would've lost so much more. As a new recruit SES volunteer myself I felt so humbled knowing the community looks up to first responders with so much respect and admiration. I'm so proud to be involved with an incredible team of professionals."

- SES Volunteer

The impact of gratitude

Expressions of gratitude from the public significantly impact first responder resilience, community resilience, and social recovery. Gratitude boosts the morale and commitment of first responders, reinforcing their dedication to their roles. It also fosters stronger bonds between the community and emergency service personnel, creating a supportive environment that enhances overall social recovery and community resilience.

By recognising and appreciating the efforts of first responders, communities contribute to their mental health and wellbeing, ensuring they remain resilient and capable in the face of ongoing challenges.

Corporate engagement

During the reporting period, Fortem engaged in partnerships with various corporations, including Akkodis, Y-Hubs and P3 Recovery, GMCT and sporting associations. In particular, Bunnings continued to support Fortem with wellbeing activities nationally, with over 500 participants benefiting from the partnership.

A new 'Thank Your First Responder' campaign was introduced as part of Fortem's corporate engagement to acknowledge and appreciate the vital contributions of first responders within organisations, many of whom are volunteers who dedicate their time and skills to first responder agencies. Fortem created a toolkit to facilitate this recognition with resources such as event flyers, social media tiles, email banners, a social badge and a corporate first responder survey.

Corporate support was received by a range of entities, some of which included:

- Australia Zoo
- Akkodis Australia
- Bunnings
- Good Morning Coffee Trader
- Workwear Group
- Omni
- Oqea Cares
- North Queensland Cowboys
- National Australia Bank
- Fujitsu Australia

Marketing and communications

Social media engagement

- Facebook: Reached 61,400 users, with over 8,000 interactions, illustrating significant community connection.
- Instagram: Experienced notable growth with a reach of 18,700, signifying expanded audience engagement.
- LinkedIn: Reached over 172,000 members with an impressive engagement rate of 8.18%, reflecting strong professional interest in Fortem's mission and activities.

Impact commentary: These metrics underscore Fortem Australia's expanding digital footprint and the meaningful engagement we foster with our audience. The substantial web traffic and active participation across social media platforms highlight the effectiveness of our communication strategies and the genuine connection we have cultivated within the first responder community.

Website overview

Fortem Australia's website attracted 49,000 users, with the majority – over 44,000 – located within Australia. The highest user activity was in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra, reflecting our strong connection with key urban communities.

Traffic sources and engagement: The website's reach was driven by a combination of direct visits (32,000 users) and organic search traffic (30,000 users), showcasing effective brand recognition and a robust online presence.

Top pages visited: The homepage and program-specific pages were the most frequently visited, highlighting the value users find in accessing our core services and information. User access was almost evenly split between desktop (49.7%) and mobile (49.1%), with minimal use of tablets, indicating versatile engagement across devices.

Resource utilisation: From late March 2024, there were over 4,200 downloads, demonstrating active engagement with and reliance on the resources we provide to support first responders and their families.

These metrics underscore Fortem Australia's expanding digital footprint and the meaningful engagement we foster with our audience. The substantial web traffic and active participation across social media platforms highlight the effectiveness of our communication strategies and the genuine connection we have cultivated within the first responder community.

Media engagement

Fortem was featured in several key media outlets, including:

- ABC NewsRadio National
- ABC PM
- ABC Sydney
- 720 ABC Perth
- ABC South West WA
- ABC Great Southern WA
- ABC North West Queensland
- ABC Hobart
- The Guardian
- Women's Agenda

Featuring in prominent media outlets continually positions Fortem as the thought leader in the field of first responder support.

Speaking engagements

Fortem played a leading role in prominent public engagements, showcasing its expertise at events such as the 2023 Disaster and Emergency Management Conference, the 2024 Frontline Mental Health Conference, a national disaster resilience webinar, and via various podcast features. Through these engagements, Fortem continued to lead conversations on resilience, highlighting the critical support needed for first responders and their families to thrive in demanding environments.

2023 disaster and emergency management conference

Fortem presented two impactful sessions at this key event on the Gold Coast, themed 'United in Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery'. Presentations included:

- A case study on Fortem's resilience support for first responders during the 2019–2020 Black Summer bushfires.
- A keynote on the link between first responder resilience and enhanced community disaster response capabilities.

These contributions underscored Fortem's role in equipping first responders and their families with tools to maintain peak performance and safety during cascading disaster events.



2024 Frontline mental health conference

Fortem delivered three significant presentations at the conference:

- 'Frontline Resilience: Strengthening Disaster Response and Family Wellbeing' – demonstrating the impact of preventative mental health programs on first responder effectiveness and community resilience.
- 'Not Just a Number: A Holistic Approach to Career Management and Transition' – outlining Fortem's comprehensive model for dignified career transitions.
- 'Keynote Panel: The Importance of Self-Care for First Responders' – emphasising self-care as vital for mental and physical wellbeing.

National disaster resilience webinar

Fortem participated in a webinar titled 'Strengthening the Resilience of First Responders and Disaster-Prone Communities'. This panel featured two Fortem staff members, a current firefighter on the frontlines of both domestic bushfires and international disaster response due to the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria. The discussion focused on the wellbeing impact on first responders during disasters, the effects on their families, and the necessary support systems for a thriving frontline sector.

A total of 500 online delegates from the first responder sector joined this webinar event.

SHAPING A FRONTLINE SECTOR THAT THRIVES.

FREE WEBINAR 21 February 2024 - 11am AEST

FRONTLINE RESILIENCE: STRENGTHENING DISASTER RESPONSE AND FAMILY WELLBEING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

WITH:

 James Maskey Director of Policy Fortem Australia	 Matt Newlands Co-Founder, Educator & Counsellor Frontline Mental Health	 Melanie Yates Director of Clinical Services, Fortem Australia	 Sam Monaghan Station Officer, Fire & Rescue NSW
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Podcast interviews

Fortem contributed to several podcasts, including:

- Southern Cross Austereo 'LiSTNR' Original Production
- Podcast on 'Triumphing Beyond Trauma for Frontline Disaster Response Personnel'.

These interviews further disseminated Fortem's insights and strategies for supporting first responders.

Importance of speaking engagements

These engagements are crucial for increasing mental health literacy among first responders and providing tangible strategies to enhance their resilience. By participating in these events, Fortem anchors itself as the leading organisation in resilience-building services. Our involvement not only spreads awareness but also equips first responders with the tools they need to thrive, thereby reinforcing Fortem's position at the forefront of this vital work.

Policy and advocacy

Throughout the 2023–24 financial year, Fortem Australia has been at the forefront of influencing policy reform and advocating for the needs of first responders and their families at a national level. Our leadership in this arena has been pivotal in advancing key initiatives aimed at fostering resilience, wellbeing, and capability within the first responder community.

Fortem played a significant role in shaping the Commonwealth Government's National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework (the Framework) and the upcoming National Mental Health Plan for Emergency Services Workers: 2024–27 (the Plan). These critical policy documents, driven by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, are set to transform mental health support across the emergency services sector. We are honoured to be recognised as a key contributor and implementation partner in the development and execution of the Framework and the Plan.

Fortem's influence extended to the Senate Select Committee's Inquiry into Australia's Disaster Resilience, where we provided comprehensive submissions, in-person testimonies, and ongoing dialogue with committee members. This proactive engagement has cemented Fortem's role as a vital partner in ensuring that the Inquiry's recommendations translate into tangible improvements. Our contributions have focused on enhancing the resilience, capability, and retention of the volunteer disaster management workforce. This strategic focus aims to reduce dependence on the Australian Defence Force for domestic disaster response, thereby preserving its readiness for international security needs.

Recognising that disaster response often comes at a significant personal cost to first responders and their families, Fortem's advocacy has centred on practical solutions to alleviate these pressures. The trauma and demands of disaster response work require a robust, sustainable support structure to bolster the wellbeing of those on the front lines. In our submissions to the Inquiry, Fortem proposed key recommendations for policy reform and government investment:

- Prioritising investment in first responder wellbeing and building their capacity for resilience as a national imperative essential to successful disaster response and recovery efforts.
- Establishing consistent, coordinated, and adequately funded support services to ensure first responders remain resilient and effective in their vital roles.

Fortem is committed to supporting all levels of government through targeted policy submissions and position statements, driving change where it is needed most. Our policy priorities advocate boldly for the reforms and investments necessary to sustain the wellbeing of Australia's first responders and their families.

The outcomes of the Senate Inquiry and our collaboration with NEMA represent a strategic alignment that reinforces the call for a coordinated approach to resilience, recovery, and retention of first responders. Through our national service delivery model, Fortem exemplifies this coordinated response, providing proactive, resilience-building services that strengthen recruitment, retention, and operational readiness of first responder volunteers in disaster-prone areas.

The Senate

Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience

Boots on the ground: Raising resilience

Thursday, 21 September 2023
Hotel Grand Chancellor
334 Flinders Street
Townsville

Townsville City Council

- Cr Jenny Hill, Mayor
- Mr Zachary Dawes, Acting Team Manager, Emergency Management
- Mr Matthew Richardson, Acting Local Disaster Coordinator; and General Manager, Property, Fleet and Emergency Management

Fortem Australia

- Mr James Maskey, Director of Policy

North Townsville Community Hub

- Mrs Sandra Elton, Manager

Australian Defence Force - Commander JTF 646M.3 Brigade

- MAJGEN Stephen Jobson, Commander, Aviation Command

State Emergency Service - Northern Region

- Mr Daryl Camp, Regional Director
- Mr Paul Cannon, Acting Controller
- Mr John Forde, Area Controller

Despite challenges posed by varied State and Commonwealth Government responsibilities, Fortem champions a national approach that emphasises community connectedness and retention as cornerstones of operational success. A coordinated national strategy, led by Commonwealth investment, is essential to enhancing the resilience, morale, and capability of first responders. Fortem's services, delivered in partnership with state agencies, underscore this vision, ensuring that thriving first responders contribute to stronger, more resilient communities and improved disaster response.

Fortem's policy and advocacy work also included submissions to the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (the Colvin Review) and a public submission to the Department of Home Affairs Discussion Paper on Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response. These contributions highlighted our comprehensive understanding of the complexities of disaster management and our commitment to proposing solutions that prioritise first responder wellbeing.

Throughout the 2023–24 financial year, Fortem maintained strong engagement with parliamentarians and their staff from all sides of the political landscape. Our non-partisan approach underscores our unwavering focus on prioritising the needs of first responders and their families. This dedication to balanced advocacy has strengthened Fortem's role as a trusted voice in policy discussions, ensuring that support for first responders remains a top priority for national policymakers.

Fortem's collaborative work with NEMA has proven essential in supporting state-based first responder agencies and enhancing their capacity to maintain emergency services. By delivering programs that promote resilience and retention, Fortem addresses the broader challenges of maintaining a skilled and motivated disaster response workforce. Our advocacy continues to press for Commonwealth leadership in fostering a coordinated national system that not only supports first responders but elevates their resilience, retention, and overall capability.

As a leading voice in the sector, Fortem is committed to advocating for sustained, nationally coordinated support for first responders and their families. We firmly believe that empowered and well-supported first responders are not just key to successful disaster responses, but are foundational to the safety and strength of Australian communities.

Our financials

Fortem Australia Limited

A.B.N 58 631 587 892

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024
	\$
Revenue	6,137,698
Other income	127,170
	-
Employee benefits expense	(4,759,520)
Service Delivery	(569,986)
Other expenses	(134,050)
Advertising and Marketing	(132,871)
Occupancy Costs	(100,205)
Travel expenses	(63,907)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(32,413)
Fundraising Costs	(3,181)
Surplus/(Deficit) before income tax	468,735
Income tax expense	-
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	468,735
Total comprehensive income for the year	468,735

Statement of Financial Position As At 30 June 2024

	2024
	\$
ASSETS	
CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	2,280,441
Trade and other receivables	366,337
Other assets	65,008
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	2,711,786
NON-CURRENT ASSETS	
Property, plant and equipment	99,793
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	99,793
TOTAL ASSETS	2,811,579
LIABILITIES	
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Trade and other payables	248,667
Short-term provisions	170,637
Other liabilities	1,349,249
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,768,553
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,768,553
NET ASSETS	1,043,026
EQUITY	
Retained earnings	1,043,026
TOTAL EQUITY	1,043,026



Fortem Australia Board

Members of the Fortem Australia Board generously donate their time to assist in the governance and strategic direction of Fortem Australia and are dedicated to supporting the mental fitness and wellbeing of first responders and their families.

Graham Ashton AM APM

Board Chair – Fortem Australia

Former Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police

Graham Ashton AM APM is the Chair of Fortem Australia's Board. Graham has a unique combination of management and leadership skills having served over 40 years in law enforcement, including as Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police from 2015 to 2020 and Deputy Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police.

Graham has been involved in internationally significant counter-terrorism operations including leading the Australian investigation into the 2002 Bali bombings for the joint Australian/ Indonesian Taskforce, in Bali. Graham's role as Police Forward Commander of this investigation resulted in him being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in October 2003. Graham also established the Victoria Police Family Violence Training Centre – an Australian first, to train police officers in providing nuanced responses to family violence incidents and has an international reputation as an advisor on matters of integrity.

In addition to a graduate qualification in management obtained from Queensland University of Technology, Graham has completed numerous leadership programs including attending the prestigious London Business School in 2009. Graham also initiated and led the development of a graduate program in integrity studies as a Visiting Fellow at Wollongong University. Graham is also a Non-Executive Director of 'Male Champions of Change Institute' and a member of the Salvation Army (Victoria) Advisory Board.

John Bale, GAICD

Partner – KPMG

Managing Director and Co-Founder – Fortem Australia

Co-Founder – Soldier On Australia

John Bale is a Partner at KPMG Australia. He is also the Co-Founder of Fortem Australia and Soldier On Australia, a charity that works side by side with veterans who have served and continue to serve our nation. John was the CEO of Soldier On from its inception in April 2012 until November 2018.

John is a graduate of the Australian Defence Force Academy and the Royal Military College – Duntroon. He has deployed to Afghanistan twice; once in 2008 and then again in 2010. He holds a Bachelor of Arts with Honours and a Masters of Arts and Management. John is also a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Anthony Court, GAICD

Lead Partner, National Security & Justice – KPMG

Anthony is the Lead Partner for the National Security & Justice Sector within KPMG. Anthony has 14 years as a commissioned officer in the Royal Australian Army followed by 25 years as a management consultant across Federal Government, defence and national security agencies.

Anthony commenced his career learning the fundamentals as a project manager in the information technology arena and grew his experience into wider capability development and implementation through to the designing and implementing organisational reform programs.

Anthony has a BSc (Hons) in Physics and a Masters in Military Electronic Systems Engineering. He is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and holds a post graduate in accounting as well as a range of certifications in project, program and portfolio management.

Carol Gobby, GAICD

Vice President of Sales and Growth – Akkodis Australia

Carol is the Vice President of Sales and Growth for Akkodis Australia, part of the Adecco Group and is a senior leader with a career spanning more than 25 years in technology consulting services in global and local organisations.

Carol has significant experience in global complex multi-tiered environments working with clients and partners across sales and business leadership, sales coaching and enablement, digital transformation, customer and employee experience, business and process envisioning, partner management and executive engagement.

Carol brings cross industry experience working closely with public sector, health, manufacturing, logistics, financial, telecommunications and resources. Carol is a change champion, leading and challenging teams to transform traditional models with a laser focus on impact, experiences, continuous improvement, and value creation. She is a supporter of women in IT, STEM and a passionate advocate for responsible business, corporate citizenship, sustainability and diversity, equity and inclusion to make a genuine human and social impact.

Frank Prendergast APM OBE

Consultant

Frank retired from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in 2018 after a career spanning 32 years, the last 15 of which were in senior leadership roles. During his career he served in a diverse range of operational areas, both domestic and international, including the investigation of terrorism, fraud, narcotics, serious organised crime, corruption and special references. He has also been heavily involved in international police capacity development, resource management, corporate governance and administration, policy development, and capability development.

In 2014 Frank was appointed as the Commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIPF). Since retirement from the AFP, Frank has worked as a consultant with a number of federal law enforcement agencies and has completed several capability and management reviews.

Brett Lightfoot, GAICD

National Director for Industry – State Director Queensland / Northern Territory Public Sector, Microsoft Australia

As the National Director for Industry – Public Sector, Brett works with a wide range of government agencies, digital platform companies and start-ups in planning and implementing innovative technology solutions that improve the quality and efficiency of citizen digital services. Brett's passion is improving the quality of healthcare, helping save our environment and protecting our citizens through data collaboration, business intelligence and artificial intelligence. Digital transformation brings the opportunity to completely transform how governments deliver services creating new citizen experiences and helping Australia be a world leading digital first country.

Brett is also a Non-Executive Director of StandByU Foundation supporting families who have been affected by early and more severe forms of domestic abuse, giving them the support they need to see a brighter future.

Libby Jevtovic

Retired

Libby is happily retired and loves to explore, read, write, travel and spend time with her family and friends. Libby's first job out of university saw her employed by the then Department of Employment, Education and Training where her roles focussed on facilitating return to work due to economic, medical, and other reasons. Transferring to Canberra, the roles became more policy and strategy-oriented until she eased out of the workforce in the social media area of a law enforcement agency, a fascinating change. After 33 years of working in mainly Federal Government jobs, raising three children, and relocating the family several times, she retired and accompanied her husband to Hong Kong for almost four and a half years.

Libby's husband was in law enforcement for 35 years, and her eldest son is currently in general duties. She has had many a sleepless night over incidents and understands how first responders' families may be affected by this work. Libby has a Bachelor's degree (major in Psychology), a Graduate Diploma in Business Management, and certificates in project management.

Fortem Australia
Responding with resilience

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fortemaustralia.org.au

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