



**Police Federation
of Australia**
The National Voice of Policing

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Media Release

Too many suicides, too much mental illness

The Police Federation of Australia takes action

Police all around Australia are devastated every time one of their fellow officers takes his or her own life.

The tragic and unnecessary deaths of three police officers in just two weeks show that holding the thin blue line comes at a very significant cost, according to Police Federation of Australia president Mark Carroll, APM.

“Unfortunately, these quality police officers were not the only ones to take their own lives in recent years,” Mr Carroll said.

“The PFA and its members extend their deepest sympathies to the heartbroken families and friends of all officers who have died so tragically.

“For simply performing their job, police officers and their families can pay a very high price: mental ill health, psychological injury and, in the worst cases, suicide.”

Mr Carroll quoted a recent Beyond Blue study, which showed that suicidal thoughts are twice as common among first responders than they are in the general population. Police and other emergency services workers are three times more likely to have some sort of suicide plan.

“The scourge of mental ill health, which destroys lives, families and careers, cannot go unaddressed,” Mr Carroll stressed.

Last year, the PFA sought funding assistance from the Commonwealth Government to mount a national mental-health programme on behalf of Australia’s police officers and their families.

“The PFA is expending its own funds on the programme too – and we’re very grateful for the government’s support,” Mr Carroll said.

“Over the past 12 months, we’ve been working on the production of a suite of compelling, cop-specific materials. In the next few months, we’ll unveil the fruits of this work.”

Along with awareness-raising posters and cop-specific handbooks like Head Notes and A Cop in the Family, the PFA will launch a compelling and powerful telemovie called Dark Blue, the likes of which has not been produced in Australia.

“Our programme has many elements – and we’re fortunate to have been guided by some eminent psychologists and psychiatrists,” Mr Carroll said.

“It’s important to stress that this won’t be a miracle cure, but it will start critical conversations in critical circles.

“Just like the rest of Australia, we need more access to more mental-health professionals, more dedicated facilities and more services.”

Mr Carroll acknowledged that police departments around Australia were also taking up the mental-health challenge.

“These are important efforts but the PFA’s programme is unrestrained by bureaucratic niceties,” he said.

“Our programme tackles mental ill health and psychological injuries in policing head-on. We simply tell it like it is: now is not the time to hold back. We all need to understand what’s going on, especially our families who suffer very much too.”

Mr Carroll said that one or two of the programme elements are specifically designed to be shared with the general public. The PFA hopes the general public will come to understand the price police officers and their families pay in the course of serving the community.

“This is a long fight but one the PFA is up for,” Mr Carroll said. “We intend to approach government again to help us continue this critical work. We’re confident of its support.”