

Continuous Improvements to the Health & Wellbeing of Remote Area Drivers

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Introduction

- ▶ Setting the scene
- ▶ Truck driving in remote Australia
- ▶ First responders
- ▶ Suicide by truck
- ▶ Psychological safety
- ▶ Strengthening safety management systems
- ▶ Educating employers and the workforce
- ▶ Retention of skilled and experienced drivers

The Industry

- ▶ Male dominated
- ▶ Ageing
- ▶ 70% of NT road network unsealed
- ▶ Limited telecommunications
- ▶ On the road, workplace and accommodation = same
- ▶ Self reliant
- ▶ Highly observant
- ▶ Less good at putting feelings into words

What's happening

- ▶ First responders
- ▶ Commonly first on the scene at serious / fatal accidents
- ▶ Satellite communications to call and assist emergency services
- ▶ May be required to provide first aid for extended periods
- ▶ Traffic control
- ▶ Once relieved of tasks by emergency services, continue journey
- ▶ EAP / Mental health GPs unavailable or not easily accessible
- ▶ Employer responsibilities

Suicide by truck

- ▶ In multi-vehicle crashes involving trucks, car driver at fault between 83% and 93% of the time.
- ▶ Suicide indicated or strongly indicated in 37.5% of fatal multi-vehicle crashes involving trucks.
- ▶ More than 3000 Australians died by suicide in 2017
(Almost double the road toll)
- ▶ More than 65,000 suicide attempts in 2017
(75% males, 25% females)
- ▶ Of all the risks for suicide, a previous attempt is the most significant risk factor for a future attempt or eventual suicide.

Suicide impacts

- ▶ Up to 60% of people who die by suicide have not come to the attention of mental health providers.
- ▶ Up to 50% of people who go to hospital for a suicide attempt fail to attend a follow up.
- ▶ The first 3-months is the highest period of risk.
- ▶ Follow up supports after a suicide attempt ARE effective in preventing future attempts.
- ▶ NT suicide rate is double the national average.

Acknowledging the issues

- ▶ National Transport Insurer statistics - overwhelming evidence
- ▶ Occupational hazards exist for truck drivers
- ▶ Better information about potential psychological impacts
- ▶ Early awareness and intervention
- ▶ Sensitivity
- ▶ Awareness of reputational harm to driver and employer
- ▶ Not crisis care but preventative skill building needed

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