

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM**

# **CHAPLAINCY**



# **Policy**

## Policy

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## **1. PURPOSE**

Chaplaincy in SES exists to provide pastoral and spiritual support to volunteers and staff of the SES and their families. SES Chaplaincy is built on those essential ministerial qualities of availability, compassion, integrity and confidentiality. The Chaplaincy program specifically provides spiritual support to volunteers and staff and their families in times of death, illness and personal tragedy and generally overlaps with other areas in providing a range of morale and welfare matters. Chaplains also advise senior officers on religious, cultural and human factors that impact on SES operations and day to day business in SES Units and in other times of need and are an integral part of the SES Critical Incident Support Program. Chaplains embrace diversity, compassion, faith and spirituality in SES.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

The Chaplaincy program in SES consists of a Senior Chaplain in State Headquarters who operates across NSW and a chaplain at each SES Region who is a volunteer. Chaplaincy in SES forms part of the Human Services Branch of State Headquarters and is managed by the Senior Chaplain and the Manager Critical Incident and Counselling Services. Chaplains are identified primarily with the Region to which they have been appointed and support the volunteers and staff in the Region Headquarters and Units in the SES Region. Chaplains are endorsed by their church bodies before taking on the role of Chaplain in SES and are drawn from a range of mainstream faith communities. Their role is non-denominational and they serve all SES members and their families regardless of whether or not they are involved in a church or religious group.

The Chaplaincy Program is in no way intended to displace parish clergy or alienate them from their SES parishioners, rather the opposite. SES Chaplains are endorsed by their church bodies before taking on their role in SES. The Chaplains roles are non-denominational and, regardless of whether or not SES volunteers and staff are involved in a church or religious group, SES Chaplains are there to support and serve. The Chaplaincy Program in SES is not a vehicle for conversion or proselytising.

Chaplains may be invited to assist parish clergy with regard to ceremonials at SES funerals and may also be invited to perform these services or other memorial services.

## **3. SCOPE**

The Chaplaincy Program consists of a Senior Chaplain and Region Chaplains who are volunteers and provides services including:

- Providing advice to senior officers on spiritual and pastoral support to SES volunteers, staff and their families
- Providing advice to senior officers on religious or cultural factors that affect SES operations
- Pastoral care and counselling regarding personal and morale problems relating to work, marriage, relationships and family and before, during and after operations
- Ministering when requested in the preparation and celebration of marriages, baptisms/child dedications and other religious services
- Provision of support to sick or injured volunteers and staff and their families through hospital or home visits
- Conducting or attending funerals and providing pastoral support to families in bereavements, where requested
- Conducting memorial services and dedications for the SES as requested

- Acting with members of the Critical Incident Support Program's Peer Support Team, Manager Critical Incident and Counselling Services and Clinical Director in critical incident stress management interventions and providing ongoing support to members of the SES.
- Training with SES members and participating in Region/Unit training activities and exercises
- Assignments to various SES functions/Region and State Headquarters conferences to offer prayers, invocations, benedictions and dedications
- Supporting SES volunteers at emergency situations or scenes of disasters and maintaining contact with the SES Critical Incident Support Program in regard to the support provided.

At these emergency situations the primary role of the SES Chaplain is the care and welfare of SES volunteers.

Region Chaplains shall advise the Senior Chaplain and the Manager Critical Incident and Counselling Services at the earliest opportunity following an incident and will call the CISP number (1800 626 800) to activate the Peer Support team when the incident is considered serious. The following list is not exhaustive, but such incidents include:

- Death or serious injury to children
- Death or serious injury of an SES member – ALSO SEE IMPORTANT NOTE BELOW
- Victims are known to members of the team
- There are multiple casualties or fatalities
- The incident is horrific – eg incineration/body parts
- The victim has suicided
- The incident is difficult or prolonged
- The incident has attracted a strong media presence or interest
- When there has been a series of major incidents involving the Unit over a short period of time
- When it is someone in the Unit's first fatality
- When it is felt that one or more members could be emotionally affected
- Any other event that is considered serious enough to justify notification

**IMPORTANT** - The Manager Critical Incident and Counselling Services must also be contacted directly if an incident results in the serious injury or death of an SES volunteer on 0408 861 765.

The Critical Incident Support Program exists with volunteer Peers and Chaplains who make up the Program's Peer Support Team. The program is available for volunteers, staff and their families and anyone in SES involved in a critical incident.

The SES Critical Incident Support Program provides:

- **Pre-incident Education and Awareness Training:** Peers conduct information about the program in the format of pre-incident education and awareness on how to manage the effects of critical incident stress is a part of an annual process of the Peers visits to SES Units. This also includes information about how the program works and how to access someone from the Peer Support Team
- **Demobilisation:** This is normally carried out for a large scale disaster or incident and aimed at larger groups after the shift stand down or after the first exposure to the incident. This is held to provide information and where food and rest may be provided

- Crisis Management Briefing: This is held for any event that impacts on a large group at anytime before exposure during or after the event and maybe repeated. This is useful for large groups where information is needed about the event
- On-Scene Support: A CISP Peer or Chaplain can be present at the scene of an incident to provide immediate support and practical assistance
- Defusing: This is an informal defusing immediately after the incident. This is usually held on scene or back at the Unit allowing the initial ventilation of feelings and provides basic information about how to get further assistance if needed. It is a discussion about the event and not a critique and also provides information about self care following an incident. This process should always occur within 24 hours of the incident and is usually sufficient to ensure there are no future problems
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: This is a more structured debriefing usually held several days after the incident. It is not an operational debriefing, but a chance to talk about what happened and understanding reactions to critical incidents. Facilitated by the Clinical Director or supporting mental health professional along with Peers and/or Chaplains when it has not been possible to conduct a Defusing within the required timeframe, if the incident has been of a very serious nature or if there is more support or help required after a Defusing
- One-to-One: Anyone can request to speak confidentially with a Peer Support Team Member, Manager Critical Incident and Counselling Services, Chaplain or Clinical Director by contacting the CISP number
- Pastoral Crisis Intervention: This is provided by SES Chaplains in the Critical Incident Support Program to mitigate a “crisis of faith” and spiritual guidance is provided to assist in the recovery
- Follow up and referral: This is carried out by any member of the Peer Support team when they are aware that someone has asked for assistance from the program and even when they are made aware of a critical incident that may be likely to impact on any individual in the SES
- The Program is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week by calling 1800 626 800  
Notifying the CISP number 1800 626 800 for assistance or guidance when looking after an individual who may need assistance or follow up and you will be asked to have the individuals permission before further contact will be made with the individual
- Advising volunteers and their families of the availability of the Critical Incident Support Program for further support or advice with matters when it may be related to a recent or previous critical incident/s
- Maintain the confidentiality of matters that may arise with respect to a volunteer you know may have accessed the Program.

#### **4. PRINCIPLES**

- SES recognises that the psychological and physical health and safety of our volunteers and staff has a direct impact on their effectiveness in their roles and the performance of the SES as a whole
- There is strong evidence to support the fact that preventative measures are significantly more effective than post incident measures, which often may take a considerable amount of effort and commitment to resolve, with less certainty of success
- SES is committed to the application of Critical Incident Stress Management and the principles of the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and the Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation Australia

- SES acknowledges that exposure to traumatic events and critical incidents may impact and we all react differently. No one can predict how an incident will impact on any particular individual. Some events will almost always have an impact
- Whilst we cannot predict who will be affected, we do not know that the impact is likely to be felt in one of four ways:
  - Thoughts: The way we think we can be disturbed by the event. We might find our thoughts returning to it without even knowing why. We might have trouble concentrating or remembering things. We may even have a distorted memory of the event
  - Reactions: Sometimes our behaviour changes. We might really want to be by ourselves. We might lose interest in things we used to enjoy or things we have to do. We may not want to eat right. Our sleep may be disturbed
  - Feelings: The way we feel might be different. We might not even know it. It might be our family who tells us we are 'losing' it or are too serious, or seem sad. It might be someone in SES who notices. If this happens, listen! They are probably right!
  - Physical Changes: Our bodies keep score of stress in interesting ways and sometimes this can cause real problems. Stress can cause all sorts of aches and pains like headaches, nausea and muscle tightness.
- Anyone can ask for assistance from the Critical Incident Support Program it does not need to be someone in the "chain of command" who determines the need for support. It is in everyone's interests to look after each other particularly if they have been impacted by a critical incident and Controllers are supportive of their members looking after themselves and in addition have a duty of care to provide the necessary assistance and support
- Information about the issues discussed with any member of the Peer Support team will be strictly confidential between the individual and the member of the team
- Information about access to the Critical Incident Support Program will be provided by members of the Peer Support Team from time to time including an information DVD – "I thought I couldn't talk to anyone". Pre-Incident Education and Awareness sessions will be conducted at SES Units by members of the Peer Support team, pamphlets and posters displaying this information are provided at all SES Headquarters
- The Manager Critical Incident Counselling Services who manages the Critical Incident Support Program may send out evaluation sheets from time to time to Units who have accessed the services of the Program and supported by members of the Peer Support Team. Volunteer feedback is important to the effectiveness of the service that is provided and your co-operation is appreciated.

## **5. PROCEDURES**

SES volunteers, staff and their families may have access to assistance from SES Chaplains by the following:

- Self referral – Where a volunteer, staff members or a member of their family chooses to contact the Chaplain for one on one support or advice
- Suggested referral – Where someone else from the Unit (eg a Controller or member of the Unit) is aware of an issue impacting on a member and may suggest that they speak to the Chaplain.

## **6. QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS**

Chaplains in SES must:

- Be ordained or licensed Ministers of mainline faith communities that are members of or are eligible to be members of the National Council of Churches in Australia or one of its affiliated inter-faith bodies

- Possess reasonable pastoral experience
- Demonstrate a willingness to function in an ecumenical/inter-faith environment within SES.

Notwithstanding the ecumenical/inter-faith nature of the SES Chaplaincy Program, sensitivity to an individual's denominational/ faith affiliation may necessitate referral to a Chaplain or priest/minister of that particular denomination or faith. Sacramental rites and other matters may require the ministrations of clergy of the specific denomination or faith. SES Chaplains will be provided with the Chaplains manual and procedures for these requirements.

- Be willing to conform to relevant SES policy and direction and guidance of the SES Senior Chaplain
- Be willing to participate in the SES Critical Incident Support Program and undertake all training to be member of the Program's Peer Support Team and participate in CISM interventions
- Possess sufficient experience and expertise to meet the spiritual, psychological and social needs of the specialised ministry of Chaplaincy in SES.

## **7. ENTITLEMENTS**

- Chaplains in SES hold no rank. For protocol purposes Chaplains refer to the Protocol Officer for further guidance as detailed in the Protocol Manual
- Chaplains will be supplied with:
  - A uniform as detailed in the SES Uniform policy
  - An SES Chaplain's stole in the appropriate denomination/faith.
  - The stole is only to be worn when functioning in the capacity of the SES Chaplain at SES related religious ceremonies.
  - Other SES PPE – Personal Protective Equipment
  - Critical Incident Support Program identified wear
  - Name badge and photo identification card.

All items issued remain SES property and therefore accountable and must be returned or disposed of in accordance with SES uniform policy guidelines.

## **8. AVAILABILITY**

Chaplains shall be available on a 24 hour basis. No-one is to be denied access to the SES Chaplaincy Program.

Chaplains will work in close liaison with:

- The Manager Critical Incident and Counselling Services, Clinical Director of the SES Critical Incident Support Program and members of the Peer Support Team
- Region Controllers and other Senior Officers in SES.

As Chaplains in SES often deal with matters of a confidential, delicate and serious nature it is most important they have unrestricted access to senior officers during operational and non-operational times.

Cross referrals between the Critical Incident Support Program and mental health professionals for critical incident support, Employee Assistance provider and Chaplaincy in SES provide a continuum of care model of volunteer and staff support and this should be expected when this does not breach confidentiality.

It is expected that after hours duty officers will inform the Chaplaincy Program of the death or serious injury of volunteers and staff in SES or any serious circumstance which may require a the Chaplains services.

## **9. ACCOUNTABILITIES**

The Commissioner is accountable for:

- Maintaining the principles of the Chaplaincy Program in SES and the role of Controllers and other Senior Officers in the spiritual well-being of volunteers and staff in SES and the provision of services including pastoral counselling and other support are provided to SES volunteers and staff and their families by SES Chaplains
- Ensuring the principles of the Chaplaincy Program are applied consistently in SES.

The Senior Chaplain is accountable for:

- Advising the Commissioner on cultural and religious issues impacting on SES operations and other chaplaincy program matters
- Providing guidance and support to the Region Chaplains in the provision of their support to SES volunteers and staff in SES.

The Manager Critical Incident and Counselling Services is accountable for:

- Managing the Critical Incident Support Program and co-ordinating the Peer Support Team in response to critical incidents in the SES and the Chaplains role in this Program
- Facilitating and training members of the Peer Support team twice a year in the application of Critical Incident Stress Management in SES and offering them feedback and practice in these skills and other training opportunities
- Liaising with members of the Management team for Volunteer and Staff Support Programs in SES and setting future direction of the Program
- Managing the contract of the Clinical Director and other mental health professionals in their role in the Program for clinical support, interventions and supervision
- Monitoring and evaluating the program
- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy of individuals who access the program.
- Reporting on the effectiveness of the program
- Advising the Director Human Services and the Commissioner of any changes that may be needed to the program over time including maintenance of effort recurrent proposals.

Region/Local/Unit Controllers have a duty of care to:

- Apply the policy and procedures for the Chaplaincy Program to provide a supportive role to volunteers for pastoral care and spiritual well-being
- Request the presence of Chaplain at Unit training activities and/or other SES functions to offer prayers, invocations, benedictions and dedications as necessary
- Request the presence of a Chaplain at emergency situations, Unit visits and at scenes of disasters as necessary.

Volunteers and Staff have a duty of care to:

- Look after themselves and request support for any matter that a Chaplain in SES may be able to provide advice or guidance on.

**APPROVED**

**COMMISSIONER**

**DATE:**

EOS/CICS/Policies/2012 Chaplaincy Policy