

# Will my caring profession care for me?

A student's experience of the South Australian Ambulance Service  
Peer Support Program



I've felt so numb/emotional/normal since my shift.

I just wanted to touch base on how you've been doing since your shift yesterday. I know those types of jobs can be hard.

I'm feeling okay but I appreciate the call!

There's no right or wrong way to feel after these experiences..

I think i'd like to talk to a professional and get some help dealing with this...

Would you like to me to put you in touch with a counsellor? OR we could meet up and talk through it some more?

*"The SAAS peer support program helped me process my experience after attending a traumatic case whilst on placement. I believe it put me on the path for Post Traumatic Growth as opposed to Post Traumatic Stress and affirmed my capacity and desire to be a paramedic."*

## Prevalence of PTS in Paramedics

- 97% of paramedics will experience at least one single traumatic event on road.
- 16-34% percent of employees suffer with post traumatic stress symptoms; 3x the prevalence in the wider population.
- Research indicates paramedics desire to speak with their colleagues after difficult jobs to debrief.

## PTS vs PTG

- Post traumatic growth is a psychological theory outlining that some individuals are able to experience positive changes following a traumatic event, if they emotionally process the experience.
- Peer support provides the framework for PTG which can lead to enhanced job satisfaction and wellbeing, decreasing rates of mental illness and increasing career longevity.

## The Power of 'peer' in Peer Support

The support from a paramedic who shares a mutual understanding of the field of work and its stressors, was crucial to my positive experience. I felt I was understood, validated and part of a wider team.

## The Vulnerability of Students

Research shows students are more stressed than the wider population. They are more vulnerable to the traumatic events that they will witness on road. It is my opinion that ensuring students have access to the SAAS peer support program is vital for the long term health of the service itself.

## Improving Access

Providing students with a clinican number on road to identify themselves may mitigate the risk of them being missed in the peer support service. Promoting self referral to peer support and a holistic approach to student wellbeing is key in the future of SAAS.

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