

# RISK FACTORS FOR BURNOUT IN AUSTRALIAN PARAMEDICS

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55.90%

A study published in the International Paramedic Practice journal, found more than half of paramedics had burnout at the time of completing the survey.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT BURNOUT? WE INVESTIGATED!

### BACKGROUND

- Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job
- It is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy<sup>2</sup>.
- Burnout has been linked to **poorer patient care**, **declining emotional** and **physical well-being**, increased rates of **medical errors**, and **declining job retention**<sup>2-4</sup>.



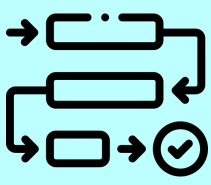
### METHODS

#### Study Steps:

- PCC Framework:
  - Population was paramedics,
  - Concept was burnout, and
  - Context was Australia
- The protocol was created in March 2023 and registered with the Open Science Framework
- EBSCoHost, Medline and SCOPUS were searched until the 25th of May, 2023

#### Study types included:

- Cross-sectional methodology (n=17)  
Mixed methods methodology (n=2)  
Retrospective (n=1)  
Literature review (n=1)  
Longitudinal (n=1)  
Cohort (n=1)  
Total (n=23)

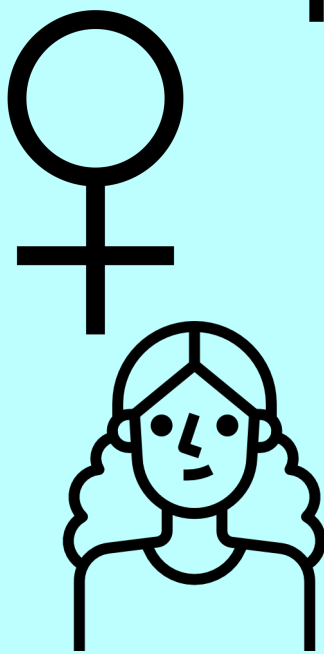


### RISK FACTOR 1: FATIGUE



- One paper revealed an increase in paramedic fatigue from 1993 to 2002, with 75% experiencing fatigue and sleep problems<sup>5</sup>.
- Two papers highlighted the connection between paramedic fatigue and their personal and professional lives<sup>5-6</sup>.
- Another paper showed a failure to meet sleep requirements during on-call periods and off-call periods, leading to significant on-shift fatigue<sup>7</sup>.

### RISK FACTOR 2: GENDER

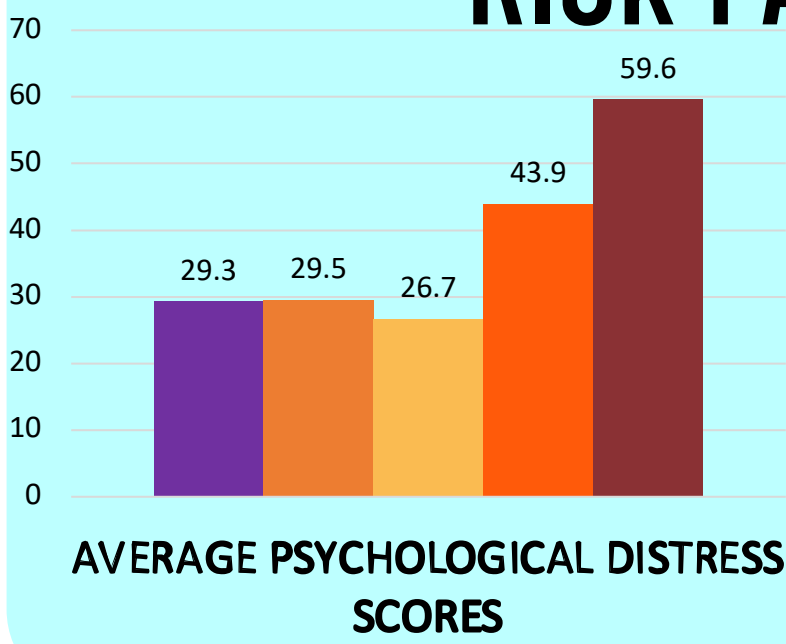


- Paramedics that identified as women were almost one-third more likely to experience total burnout than paramedics that identified as men<sup>1</sup>.
- Females experience higher levels of burnout in all categories with emotional exhaustion being particularly higher than males<sup>9</sup>.

#### Five key causes for higher levels of burnout in women<sup>10</sup>:

- returning to work with <12-hour break,
- exposure to gossip,
- not enough time to do things,
- sexual assault, and
- lack of trust/ justice/ respect at work.

### RISK FACTOR 3: LGBTQ+



- LGBTQ+ paramedics reported higher rates of lifetime suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts.<sup>11</sup>
- This impacted burnout levels amongst paramedics identifying within this group

### RISK FACTOR 4: WORK CULTURE

#### 5 MAIN ISSUES WITH WORK CULTURE

- STIGMA
- RURAL PLACEMENT
- MENTAL & PHYSICAL INJURY
- MANAGEMENT
- OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS

- Burnout in paramedics impacted by how supportive and employee minded their service is.
- Poor organisational responses contribute to poor mental health in paramedics
- 35.1% of paramedics had issues with poor management.
- Only 28.5% paramedics stated feeling safe at work.

## ARE THOSE AROUND YOU STRUGGLING? HERE ARE SOME POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS<sup>13</sup>



INCREASED DRINKING



ANGER AND IRRITABILITY



DECREASED APPETITE



INSOMNIA



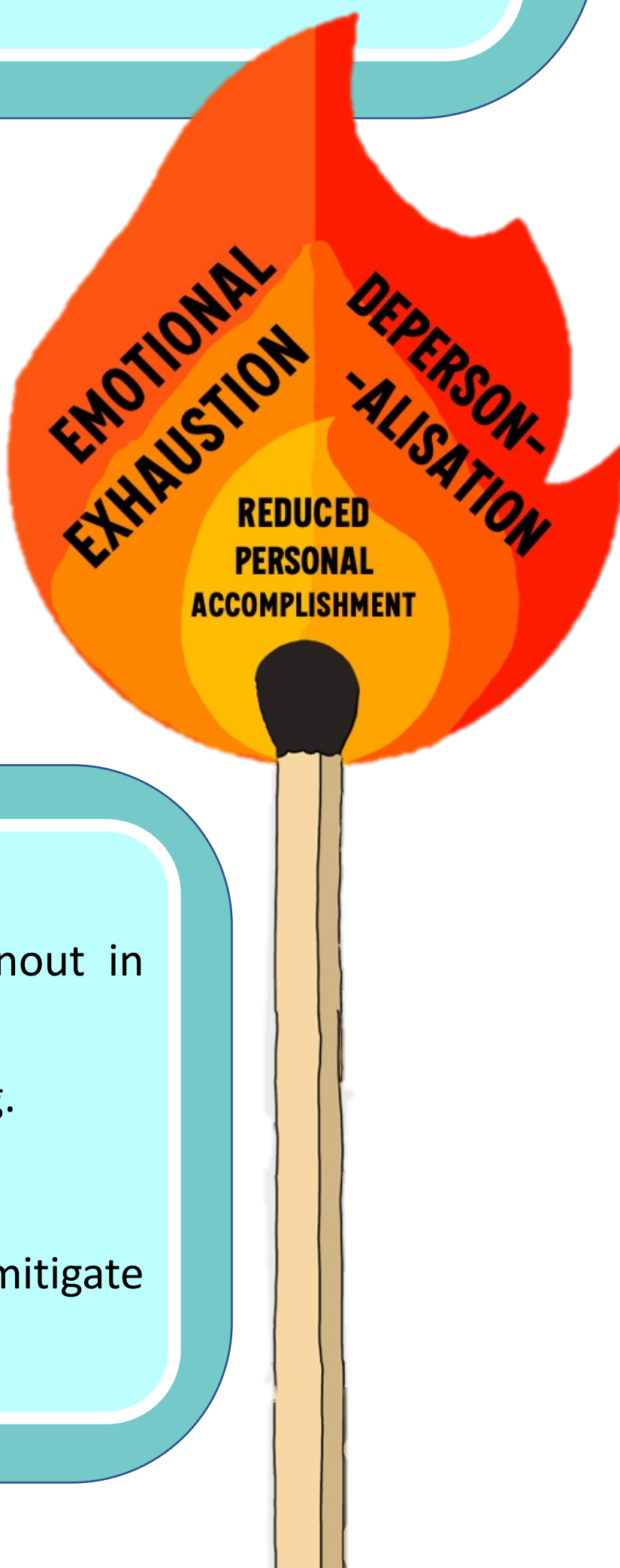
INCREASED ILLNESSES



CYNICAL OUTLOOK



SOCIAL ISOLATION



### CONCLUSIONS

- This scoping review highlighted the pressing need to address the overlooked and under-researched risk factors for burnout in Australian paramedics.
- The rate and severity of paramedic burnout has been growing, leading to service delivery issues impacting paramedic well-being.
- This review determined four key identifiable and modifiable factors; **fatigue**, **gender**, **LGBTQ+** and **work culture**.
- By better understanding how these concepts lead to burnout, steps can be taken at an individual and organisational level to mitigate burnout in paramedics, improving service delivery and overall paramedic well-being.

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3 COMPONENTS OF BURNOUT