



**DISASTER
RELIEF
AUSTRALIA**



Wellbeing Study Interim Report Highlights

Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) has witnessed the power that helping others in their time of need has on volunteer wellbeing. Although DRA was aware of this, before the Wellbeing Study Interim Report, there was no evidence to fully explain how service in DRA makes sick people better.

The Wellbeing Study Interim Report provides scientific proof that:

Volunteering with DRA improves wellbeing

The data illustrates that:

- DRA volunteers, on average, show significant improvements in most mental health outcomes. These effects are sustained over the longer-term.
- Volunteering with DRA had the greatest impact on vulnerable veterans. It made them feel useful and regain a sense of purpose, often when they felt they had few options left.

The way that DRA supports wellbeing is unique from mainstay interventions

- The way in which service in DRA leads to improved mental health outcomes and a lower risk of suicide is distinct from mainstay interventions such as psychological therapy.
- DRA activities map primarily onto drivers of wellbeing that serve to protect people from developing serious illness and behaviours (such as suicide), as well as aiding in recovery.
- By focusing on disaster relief, veterans were able to find a sense of pride in their military service (often over-coming feelings of guilt and shame). This allowed them to reframe military service in a positive light while performing a national good.

For more information about DRA,
head to disasterreliefaustraliaus.org

To contact DRA about the Wellbeing Interim
Report, contact info@disasterreliefaus.org

Our Research Partners:



How is DRA doing wellbeing differently from mainstay interventions?

The Wellbeing Study identified four main drivers that provide a holistic support system for volunteer wellbeing:

Informal Support Network

- **Connection** - DRA provides an environment in which volunteers can form strong friendships, with personal relationships being a big driver for any wellbeing impact. DRA supports connection with family, friends and the community through shared experiences, where volunteers are physically active in the service of others.
- **Supportive conversations** – the creation of strong friendships provides a comfortable environment for supportive conversations, particularly for vulnerable volunteers, some of whom prefer informal conversations over formal psychological therapy.
- The supportive conversation and connection with likeminded people ultimately creates an **informal support network** for DRA volunteers. DRA volunteers have a higher than usual wellbeing literacy. This is attributed to DRA's intentional focus on wellbeing related training for volunteers and the support of a national wellbeing team.

Active Volunteering

DRA offers the opportunity to be physically active in the service of others. Being physically engaged in activity is a well-known contributor to better overall health outcomes.

Personal Development

DRA provides multiple professional development opportunities. These opportunities are both informal and formal and volunteers can choose their own path to upskilling, at no cost to them. Volunteers can choose to engage in training opportunities ranging from aerial damage assessment to mental health first aid, to chainsawing and enhanced computer skills, depending on their area of interest. Learning new skills is known to lead to improved self-worth.

Recognition

Volunteering with DRA provides an opportunity for volunteers to be recognised by fellow volunteers and the broader community in their efforts to support communities in their darkest hour. This recognition provides an opportunity to stimulate self-worth.

What drivers of wellbeing does volunteering with DRA map to?

The Wellbeing Study Interim Report shows the impact volunteering with DRA has upstream, both preventing people from becoming unwell and mitigating the effects of illness by creating positive human connection and promoting specific drivers of wellbeing including:

