



OFFICIAL: Sensitive

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Hon. Ms Laura Curran MLC
Parliament House
Adelaide SA 5000

Email: lungisa.bickle@parliament.sa.gov.au

Dear Hon. Ms Curran

Re: Freedom of Information Act application

In reference to your application made pursuant to the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* (FOI Act), access was sought to:

“Please provide copies of all documents containing the following information: The number of police officers (per year) who go on leave or are discharged due to mental health reasons and what early intervention support is given to them in between mental health issues being identified and the officer being discharged, or relevant leave being taken.”

On 31 October 2022, I had a telephone conversation with Ms Bickle regarding the scope of your request. She confirmed that you were not seeking all documents as stated, just the last part of your request. She narrowed the scope to:

“The number of police officers (per year) who go on leave or are discharged due to mental health reasons and what early intervention support is given to them in between mental health issues being identified and the officer being discharged, or relevant leave being taken.”

In regards to this part of your request:

“The number of police officers (per year) who go on leavedue to mental health reasons.....”

It is unknown how many police officers go on leave due to mental health reasons as there is no reliable data available. When a member takes sick leave they are not required to identify the exact reason for absence, rather the generic term of ‘*medical condition*’ is used.

However, if a police officer makes a claim under the Return to Work Act for **work-related injuries** due to psychological injury, this data is captured via the Self Insured Management System (SIMS). In 2021-2022 work-related mental health claims resulted in 71 police officers taking time off work which encompassed 4037 days lost across the organisation.



In regards to this part of your request:

“The number of police officers (per year) who.....are discharged due to mental health reasons.....”

The Commissioner of Police has the power to terminate a member for physical or mental disability or illness pursuant to section 45 of the *Police Act 1998*.

45—Physical or mental disability or illness

If the Commissioner is satisfied after due inquiry that the appointment of a member of SA Police should be terminated because of the member's incapacity to perform duties as a member by reason of physical or mental disability or illness, the Commissioner may terminate the appointment of the member.

The Commissioner has not exercised this power in the last five years. Therefore no police officer has been ‘discharged’ due to mental health reasons in the last five years.

In regards to this part of your request:

“.....what early intervention support is given to them in between mental health issues being identified and the officer being discharged, or relevant leave being taken.”

SAPOL employees who are experiencing mental health challenges are often referred by the workplace to receive support from SAPOL's Employee Assistance Section (EAS). Employees also self-refer and in other circumstances are automatically referred to EAS via the submission of a Hazard Incident Report (SIMS). Regardless of the referral method, when EAS become aware of an employee experiencing mental health challenges a range of different services are made available to the employee including social work, psychology, medical and chaplaincy functions. The EAS team can also refer employees to external assistance via the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which is currently administered by Corporate Health Group and is available to the police officer and their immediate family.

EAS and EAP services are routinely promoted to all employees and a link to EAS service exists on SAPOL home intranet page. All employees are encouraged to seek assistance in the event they require mental health support and there is an expectation that all performance management conversations are underpinned with a Health and Wellbeing discussion between the employer and employee.

Early intervention support is available via the Health and Wellbeing Network which offers numerous programs to assist with mental health issues, including but not limited to: the Reconditioning Program, Health Partnerships via the Preferred Providers List and peer support via the Health and Wellbeing Officers and Diversity and Inclusion Officers.

Yours sincerely



Senior Sergeant Paul Friend
Freedom of Information Unit
(Accredited Freedom of Information Officer)

15 December 2022