

NRCoP & ANZSOG present

A focus on the safety and wellbeing of frontline regulatory officers in the field

Panellists: Diane Schultz, Luke Bond, Mandy Belfrage

Facilitator: Martyn Campbell

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Question 1: Luke Bond

How do panel members make sure that identifying the risks and possible hazards doesn't scare people away from being a regulator?

Answer

It is critical to manage expectations from the outset and don't "sugar coat" the work. If people understand that the work of a regulator involves, at times, engaging with people who may have heightened emotions or be aggressive due to the inherent adversarial nature of the work, then firstly the employee can choose if that is or isn't the work they wish to be involved in and secondly the employer has a duty of care/obligation to put controls in place to manage WHS&W risks. These controls (eg resources, procedures, training, PPE) need to be documented, endorsed, articulated, and then implemented every time to increase the certainty of safety and in doing so, enhance the confidence, capability and success of the regulator.

Question 2: Mandy Belfrage

Could the panel comment on whether you think counselling should be available to officers that have experienced a traumatic event and whether this should be mandatory?

Answer

Support service should absolutely be made accessible to all employees exposed to hazards relating to traumatic events as a result of the work they do. What support services you offer depends on the types of hazards employee are exposed to and the frequency of the exposure.

Counselling is an option that can be beneficial for employees however it is important to understand that we are all individuals, and some employees may not find counselling is the best option for them. Making counselling mandatory may have a negative impact on your employees so having alternative support options may be more beneficial and meaningful for your employees.