

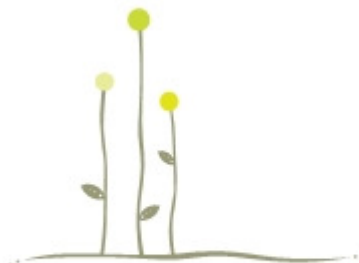
MATES in Construction

ASIST Workers Survey Report

December 2013

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Cate Banks Consulting in conjunction with Awareness Australia.



Cate Banks Consulting

Contents

- 1. Executive Summary 3
- 2. Introduction 4
- 3. Research Methodology 4
- 4. Research Findings 6
- 5. Research Findings – Awareness and understanding of the ASIST model 7
- 6. Research Findings – Evaluation of training 13
- 7. Research Findings – ASIST worker’s support within their Organisation 14
- 8. Research Findings – Further support from MIC 16
- 9. Research Conclusions 17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an analysis and evaluation of a survey conducted by Awareness Australia with the participants whom had completed Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training with Mates in Construction.

The research was conducted by telephone interview in survey form with a mixture of open and closed questions. The data was manually entered into a database and analysis took the form of observer impression with an examination from the data provided. Some coding of the data was used where possible.

The research was directed by the requirement of MATES in Construction to evaluate the experience of as many ASIST workers as possible and provide the organisation with an accurate and useable evaluation of the current program from the perspective of trainees.

Summary of Findings

- 69 ASIST workers participated in the survey
- 99% of participants scored the training very highly.
- ASIST workers are committed to their roles in raising awareness of the issue of suicide; helping recognise signs of suicide, demystifying suicide and educating and connecting with fellow workers to support them and refer to appropriate services
- 60% of participants said they had used the skills at work
- 98.5% of participants scored the ASIST training provided by MIC very highly
- The most recent use of skills in their most recent intervention demonstrated a positive and effective use of ASIST skills in discussing suicide.
- 89% of participants rated the organisational support for their role favourably.
- The research appears to suggest that the higher the level of involvement with MIC programs, the greater support the individual ASIST worker received from the organisation.
- 70% of ASIST workers onsite have contact with or know about other ASIST workers or Connectors on site. However, only 25% of the participants had contact daily or weekly and 27% of participants never had contact.
- Participants were keen to get further support from MIC with respect to their roles ASIST workers particularly in organisations where the support for their roles is less prominent.

INTRODUCTION

MATES in Construction (MIC) is a charity, set up to reduce the high rates of suicide in the Queensland construction industry. It also works to improve the mental health and well-being of workers through a range of training programs and initiatives. Between October 2009 and January 2013, 260 workers were trained by MIC as ASIST Suicide First Aid workers.

In March of 2013 Awareness Australia was commissioned to undertake a survey of participants whom had completed Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) with MIC. The Survey commenced in April 2013. The scope and terms of the project were done in conjunction with the CEO, the Operations Manager and the Academic Reference Committee of MIC.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Part 1 - Developing Survey Tool

An agreed survey tool was developed by the researcher, Tim Casey with a phone list supplied by Mates in Construction, to assist in surveying and data collection. Awareness Australia established a method, system, and equipment for surveying and collecting of data based on the survey tool provided. The survey tool was designed to collate several themes from the data

- (1) Job role demographics
- (2) Awareness and understanding of ASIST
 - a. Use of ASIST by individuals
 - b. Application of the training to the individual work scenario
- (3) Information about the training received
- (4) Evaluation of ASIST training, including:
 - a. usefulness of the training
- (5) Organisational support
- (6) MIC support

The survey also had provision for the interviewer to provide assistance and referral to the interviewee if required, in acknowledgement of the difficulty of the role of the ASIST worker.

Part 2 – Pilot Survey

The Pilot phase was completed after 10 ASIST workers were surveyed. The interim results were assessed in consultation with MATES in Construction and adjustments were made to the survey tool where required.

Part 3 – Survey Phase 1 and 2

The target of 100 completed interviews and the expected 20 minutes for completion of the survey tool were reassessed to meet the actual times required and the number of participants available to be surveyed as recorded in the pilot phase. Further minor adjustments were made to the survey tool after 28 completed surveys were conducted. A total of 69 surveys were completed from an eligible and contactable group of 193, that is approximately 35% of the potential pool¹.

This report has been written by Dr Cate Banks, an independent research consultant with Cate Banks Consulting.

¹ The contactable pool were spoken to or messages left but no further contact was made in the timeframe available. The other potential candidates were uncontactable, where possible the MIC Database has been updated.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Who participated?

Participants were asked what role they had in an organisation. The survey provided a series of categories and an option for “others”. There were a significant number of participants who did not fit into the defined categories. These will be outlined in a separate table. Some of the participants had two roles and answered accordingly.

The table below provides the numbers and different types of roles

Apprentice	0
Not in industry	2
Tradesman	5
Administrator	5
Labourer	7
Union Delegate	11
Supervisor/Manager	15
Safety Rep	17
Other	25

As mentioned above there were a significant number of participants who came from other areas within the workforce. These have been grouped into common groups.

Job Role	No
Teacher/Trainer	10
HR/Recruitment	3
Counsellor	2
Manager	3
Business	1
First Aid/Health	2
Union	1
Self employed	1
Compliance	2

AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE ASIST MODEL

As could be expected, the target participants were well aware of ASIST as part of the MIC program. The questions targeted in this section were to identify (1) why participants chose to participate in the training and (2) to gain insight into how participants felt about using the skills learned.

While the participants really only had two choices of why they chose to do the training (1) work or (2) personal choice, many of the participants who chose work related reasons also indicated personal reasons.² The responses are outlined in the list below:

Help my mates	38
Role on Site	32
Personal Experience of suicide	18
Useful in other aspects of my life	17
Asked to attend by employer	7
Other	0

Those participants who answered the personal reasons also added the following comments:

- “Lost a lot of friends to suicide over the years”
- “Involved in community based suicide prevention and post bereavement education”
- “Previous experience of Personal problems had resulted in suicidal thoughts”
- “Family member experiencing feeling of suicide”
- “Had a lot of friends whom have completed suicide”

Using ASIST skills

As mentioned, the participants were asked to answer a series of questions about using the model, particularly in terms of both the amount of use and types of skills. Forty-one participants (60%) had used the model at work and 28 (40%) said they had not. There were 40 responses recorded regarding how the participants had used the skills and there were vast differences in the number of responses. For example, one participant said they estimated using the skills 250 times while eight participants said they had used the skills once.

² There was scope to mark more than one reason

Below is a table outlining the spread.

No of participants	No of times used ASIST SKILLS at all
1	250
1	50
1	40
1	24
1	17
1	14
2	12
2	10
1	8
1	5
11	4
3	3
6	2
8	1

Three quarters of the participants said they had not used (or minimally i.e. once) their skills in the last three months. The spread of reported use of a three-month period was from 0-6 times.

There was no question in the survey asking participants whether they could expand on their thoughts on the amount of need. For instance why they felt they had not used specific skills.

Types of issues

Of the issues that the participants dealt with, the summary below details the majority of the issues:

- Suicidal thoughts
- Family, relationship and family law matters
- Drug and alcohol related issues
- Work related stress
- Financial problems

Participants were asked about the number of people they had helped as a result of suicidal thoughts.

No of participants	No of times used
11	0
8	1
10	2
3	3
4	4
2	5
2	6
1	8
41	

In terms of use of skills, participants were asked about who they used their skills in their most recent interventions. The table below provide the responses given, which all demonstrated a positive and effective use of ASIST skills provided in the training depending on the individual case scenario.

MOST RECENT ASIST INTERVENTION	YES	NO
Were you able to ask them directly about suicide?	30	9
Did you encourage them to talk about their reasons for dying?	25	15
Did you encourage them to talk about their reasons for living?	30	9
Did you ask them questions about a current suicide plan?	19	22
Were you able to find out what resources they had available such as family, friends or a counsellor?	38	11
Were you able to contract a safe plan with them?	27	6
Were you able to refer them to further help?	33	2
Did you follow up with them?	37	2

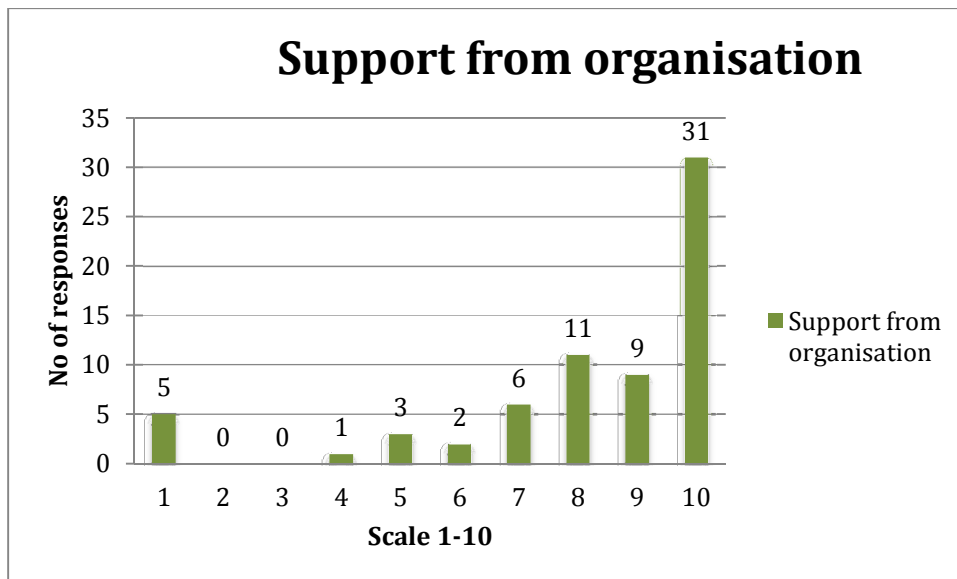
Compatibility

Participants were asked how compatible the training was to their work practice by rating it on a scale of 1-10, 1 being not compatible, 5 being “sort of compatible”, 10 being “ASIST is critical to the role”. The responses were as follows:

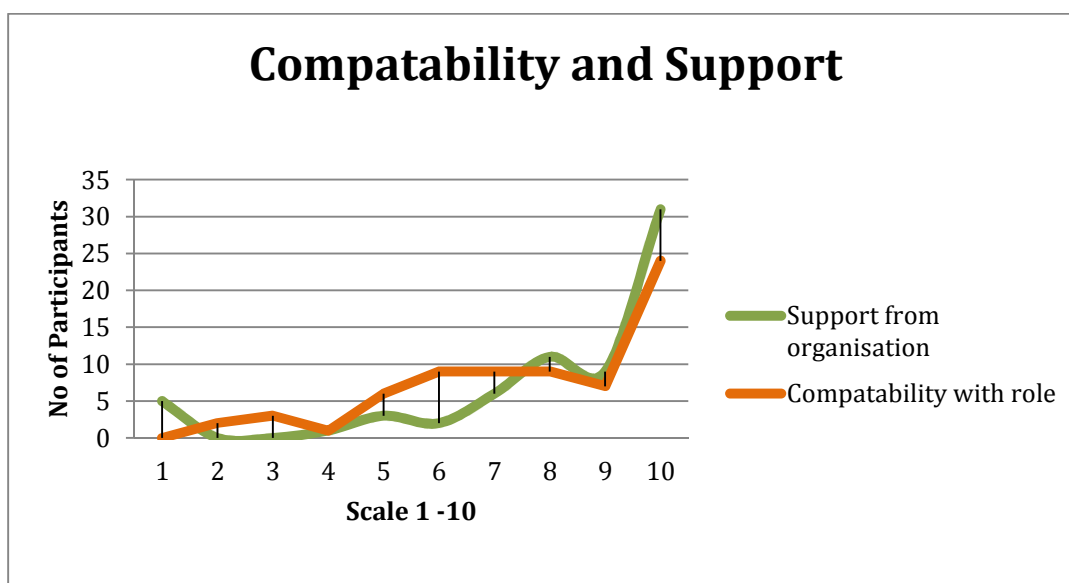
Degree of compatibility		No of participants
Not being compatible at all	1	
	2	2
	3	3
	4	1
Sort of compatible	5	5
	6	9
	7	9
	8	9
	9	7
ASIST is critical to your role	10	23
Total		68

There was a disparity of responses from the participants, with only four participants making further comments regarding the compatibility of the training to their work practice. Of those who did respond, one participant said that “there were no compatible elements” and three said there were many or all compatible aspects. But the brevity of the responses add little value to the overall analysis. Further insight into how ASIST may be integrated into work roles would be both beneficial for participants, their employers and for MIC in reviewing training and follow-up needs.

Participants were also asked whether their workplace support their ASIST role by rating them on a scale of 1 being “nor supportive at all”, 5 being “moderately supportive” and 10 being “100% on board with your role”. The results of this were very positive. Sixty two (62) out of the sixty nine (69) participants rated the organisational support 5 and above, this was 89% of the total participants. Interestingly, 5 participants scored 1 and 1 scored 4. The responses are documented in the following graph, although it is not clear from these results what issues the participants identified as a “lack of support” from an organisation.



It is helpful to consider the comparison between the feeling from participants about the compatibility of the training to work practice with the organisational support for the role as an ASIST worker. The following graph demonstrates that comparison.

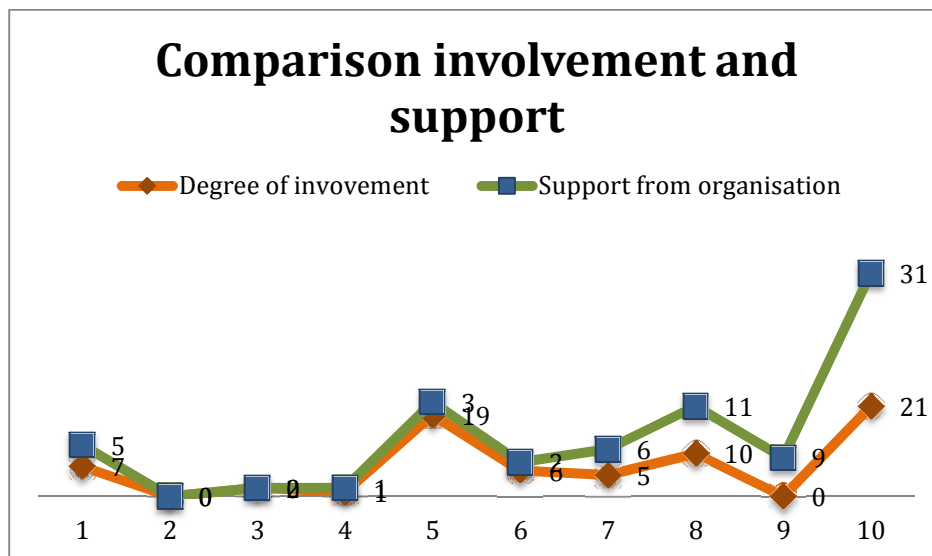


In addition to asking participants about the organisational support, they were asked the extent to which their organisation was “involved “in the MIC programs. These scales were graded from 1-10: 1 being “not running MIC “(meaning not using any programs), 5 being “running the occasional GAT and Connector training “and 10 being “absolutely connected to MIC”.

Not all participants responded to the questions. The responses to those questions is depicted in the following table below:

Degree of involvement	No of participants
No response	2
1	6
2	0
3	0
4	1
5	3
6	2
7	6
8	10
9	10
10	30
TOTAL	69

Looking across the responses in this area, it appears that the higher the level of involvement with MIC programs, the greater support the individual ASIST worker received from the organisation. In comparing the degree of involvement with the level of support, we can see the following correlation in the graph below:



EVALUATION OF TRAINING

Usefulness of the Training

Participants were asked on a scale of 1-10 about the usefulness of ASIST.³ The scoring was as follows: 1 being a “waste of time”, 5 being “pretty useful” and 10 being “one of the best things I have ever done”. 98.5% of participants scored the training above 7. Only 1 person scored the scale below 7. The table below outlines the breakdown of responses.

Participant rating	Response No	Percentage
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	1	1.5%
5	0	0%
6	0	0%
7	8	12%
8	21	30%
9	17	24.5%
10	22	32%
	69	100%

The participants were also asked what they found to be the single most important thing learnt at the training. Responses were fairly similar and have been categorised together thematically :

1. Identifying suicide signs and symptoms (n = 48), some examples were

- “learnt not to avoid the situation and be direct in asking the questions”;
- “Greater sense of some ones emotional state of suicidal thoughts”,
- “The reasoning behind why people have suicide thoughts and the many triggers that cause them”,
- “How to understand the signs and symptoms of someone doing it tough.

2. Broader views of remaining open and aware to the issues about suicide (n = 7)

³ The question was “How good was the training”

- “Spontaneity and authenticity”
- “The statistics rates in Australia they were an eye opener”
- “Gob smacked by the statistics and the prevalence of workers in need”
- “To keep an open mind and be aware of situations that could be about suicide”

3. Role of ASIST worker as referral points (n=5)

- “We are not there to help but connect them to MIC/resources and learnt a lot about workmates”
- “The knowledge of agency support and setting up of internal ASIST network.

ASIST WORKER’S SUPPORT WITHIN THEIR ORGANISATION

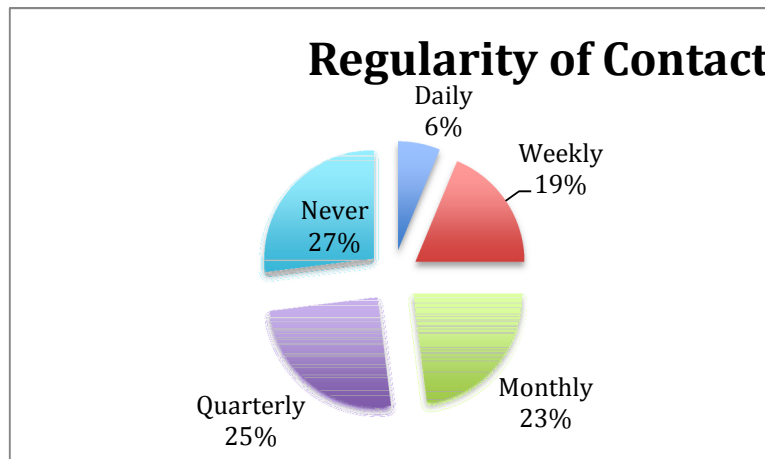
The participants were asked about the compatibility of the role of ASIST workers and the correlation of the organisations support of their role. In addition to these questions participants were also asked questions about the support they received from their organisation as an ASIST worker. Specifically participants were asked whether they had contact with other staff using MIC programs within their organisation. Seventy percent (70%) of ASIST workers onsite have contact with or know about other ASIST workers or Connectors on site.

The survey did not seek further information from those participants who said that they did not know of, or link in with ASIST workers onsite or have contact with or know about Connectors on site. It would be interesting to follow up this issue in further research and whether this relates to the degree to which an organisation is engaged fully or receptive to the MIC program.

Those participants who did report having contact with other ASIST and or Connectors in their respective MIC roles did say, however that contact was not very regular. Only 25% of the participants had contact daily or weekly and 27% of participants never had contact. This is also an interesting finding, and would be an important issue for the MIC to follow up with ASIST workers and organisations.

Almost half of the participants only had monthly quarterly contact as depicted in the detailed view of the reported contact:

Contact	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	TOTAL
Number	3	9	11	12	13	48
Percentage	6.25%	18.75%	23%	25%	27%	100%



Despite lack of contact with other colleagues conducting this work, participants were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about recommending MIC programs. When asked on a scale from 1-10 whether they would “discourage my employer from running MIC” (1), “It would be great if they did” (5) or “I would work really hard to convince my employer to use the MIC Program” (10) to future employers. The following responses were provided:

Increasing Scale	Descriptor	Number
1	Discourage	0
2		0
3		0
4		0
5	Encourage	2
6		1
7		8
8		10
9		4
10	Strongly encourage	44
Total		69

It would be interesting in future follow up research to ask the same questions of ASIST workers and add a question of “why”. This would elicit more information about what is working well from the perspective of the ASIST workers and would provide more information for MIC.

FURTHER SUPPORT FROM MIC

Participants were keen to get further support from MIC with respect to their roles. They were given a choice of the categories below, some responded to more than one category. Responses are outlined below.

Opportunities for training/updates	26
Online newsletter	23
FO Support	14
Contact with other ASIST workers	14
App	13
Resources on Web	10
Other	7
Online forum	5
Smart phone app	13

Suggestions from participants regarding the “other” category included:

- “More efficient response from MIC in time of intervention needs”
- “Visits regional sites.. more posters and the like around sites”
- Merchandise such as Fridge magnets, MIC note books, stickers and pens
- More Information for site notice board
- More contact with MIC staff at least monthly

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

This research was the first type of research conducted by MIC with ASIST workers on a larger scale. It is an excellent start to gaining insight into the impact of the ASIST on workers and provided some fodder for further questions to pursue in the future. Overall, the feedback about MIC's ASIST program from the participating ASIST workers was extremely informative. The value and purpose of the training was clearly conveyed by the participants and from the ASIST workers who are confident with the use of the additional skill set the training seems to be a success. Much of the data from this study is consistent with the research conducted in December 2012 by Footprints which ran a focus group of ASIST workers.⁴

This survey confirmed the findings of the Footprints research that it is important for MIC to continue with the work they are doing to build awareness of the benefits of the program to continue to support ASIST workers. We know that the ASIST workers are committed to their roles in raising awareness of the issue of suicide; helping recognise signs of suicide, debunking myths and educating fellow workers; in order to make it easier for all workers to get help where it is needed.

One of the most important findings of this research discussed on pages 6-8 was that participants appeared to be telling us that the higher the level of involvement with MIC programs, the greater support the individual ASIST worker received from the organisation. This was an important element in how the ASIST workers felt they could conduct their role, and is also important feedback for MIC and how their programs run. There is no doubt that the program is highly valued, participants are involved appropriately. While there are some participants who are a little unclear about whether they use the skills in their current roles this appears to be related to the amount of support they receive from the organisation. This is a useful finding to continue to engage with ASIST workers and to assess training and marketing needs. ASIST workers also identified the importance of being connected to a community of other individuals who have a role identified from a MIC program (whether ASIST workers or others).

All participants were very positive about the training provided by MIC. Participants seemed to be seeking more support from MIC in terms of contact and information follow up. This goal should be fairly easy to achieve given the commitment MIC has to support individuals and organisations depending on what those communities need.

⁴ MATES IN CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM EVALUATION Report of Findings, December 2012 at 21-25 (Footprints Market Research).