



**Mental Health
Australia**

2023 Annual Issues & Opportunities Workshop Report

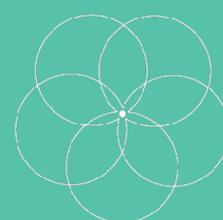
May 2023

**Mentally healthy people,
mentally healthy communities**

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Introduction

Annual Issues & Opportunities Workshop

Each year, Mental Health Australia hosts an Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop for members of the National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives (National Register) and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) and the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group from the National Multicultural Mental Health Project (Embrace).

These two-day workshops aim to further develop the representative skills of mental health consumers and carers already participating in national policy initiatives. In particular, the workshops are designed to develop representatives' advocacy, policy development and leadership skills. The workshops also provide important networking opportunities for representatives.

The 2023 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop was held in Canberra, ACT, on Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 May 2023 and was attended by 50 mental health consumer and carer representatives.

The theme chosen for the Annual Workshop was "Working together, leading change. Lived experience leadership, unity, diversity, human rights, and advocacy." This provided the framing for a varied program of speakers, thought-provoking discussions, and plenty of opportunities to advance participants' voices in their valuable work representing people with lived/living experience as consumers and carers.

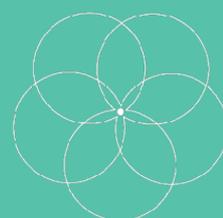
An evaluation survey was sent to all participants following the 2022 Workshop, which received a response from 48% of attendees and showed a high degree of satisfaction with the event.

This report provides highlights from the two-day event and a summary of the key themes raised by those present at the annual workshop sessions and through the workshop evaluation survey.

2023 Workshop Attendees

National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives

The National Register is a pool of 60 trained mental health consumer and carer representatives from across Australia. National Register members work at the national level to provide a strong consumer and carer voice in the mental health sector. The National Register is a Mental Health Australia project.



National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum

The NMHCCF is a combined national voice for mental health consumers and carers. The NMHCCF listen, learn, influence and advocate in matters of mental health reform. Mental Health Australia auspices and has a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the NMHCCF.

Embrace CALD Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group

This group is comprised of a CALD mental health consumer representative and a CALD mental health carer representative from each state and territory of Australia. The CALD Group includes a passionate, energised, and diverse mix of voices, and provides advice to the National Multicultural Mental Health Project Alliance based on members' lived experience and connections to their communities.

2023 Workshop Working Group

The 2023 Workshop was informed by a working group of consumer and carer representatives, who helped shape the theme and agenda for the workshop.

The agenda was designed to include a combination of presentations by invited guest speakers, panel discussions as well as networking opportunities and table activities. The working group also ensured that some light-hearted moments were incorporated into each day and that a chill-out space was made available to participants throughout the workshop.

The working group developed the workshop theme – “Working together, leading change. Lived experience leadership, unity, diversity, human rights, and advocacy” – which provided a focus for the two-day event.

Working group members were:

Evan Bichara

National Register Consumer Representative

Roz Havard

NMHCCF Carer Representative

Lorraine Powell

National Register Consumer Representative

Heather Nowak

NMHCCF Consumer Representative

Ailsa Rayner

National Register Consumer Representative

Paul Thompson

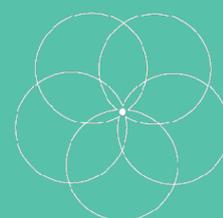
NMHCCF Consumer Representative

Darren Jiggins

National Register Consumer Representative

Cindy Heddle

NMHCCF Carer Representative

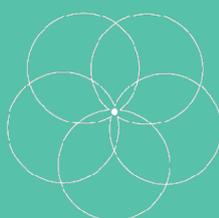


Facilitators

Sandy Watson and Kath Thorburn from inside out & associates Australia facilitated the 2023 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop. Sandy and Kath are co-founders of inside out & associates Australia, a mental health training and consultancy grounded in the intentional use of lived experience to inform and transform responses to mental distress. Sandy is a consumer expert by experience and Kath brings family/carer experience. Both have extensive backgrounds as educators, public speakers, advocates and leaders in mental health, social action, and alternatives.

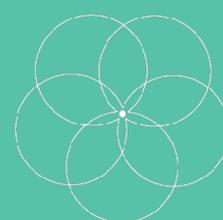
Visual / Graphic Facilitation

Arran McKenna from Happydance Creative captured the key messages and presentations in the form of digital sketches. These are shown throughout this report



Day 1: Thursday 15 May 2023

9:00	Open and Acknowledgment of Country	
9:05	Recognition of lived experience	
9:10	Workshop welcome	
9:50	Effective Mental Health Reform – Big sky thinking panel discussion.	
10:40	Morning tea – state and territory networking	
11:10	Carolyn Nikoloski, CEO Mental Health Australia	
12:10	Voices in Action – Member updates	
12:30	Lunch	
1:30	Together we can activity	
1:50	Workshop – Application and EO Writing	Workshop – Active Listening
3:20	Afternoon tea	
3:50	Reviews and commissions effecting change	
4:40	Capturing the wisdom from day one and end of day announcements	
5:00	Close	



Panel Discussion: Effective Mental Health Reform – Big Sky Thinking

Simon Katterl
Heather Nowak
Lyn English
John Yusuf
Associate Professor Louise Stone

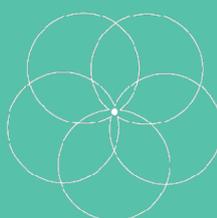
It's now 2033. As a result of our work over the years. Our collective efforts changed things for the better! What has happened?"

Simon Katterl spoke about restoring justice and how we began moving to care, treatment and support based on freedom and equality, and that the foundational 'twin pillars' of this were understanding and responding to the drivers of social and emotional wellbeing and reckoning with harm in the system through restorative justice. A key part of this process was dealing with identity – consumers/survivors and families/carers/supporters identifying and honouring places, spaces and experiences. Reckoning with harm meant acknowledging the past, disrupting the present AND charting a path forward to a better future. The results of this change were: apologies, reparations, guarantees of non-repetition, changed laws and policies, changed community attitudes and real opportunities for leadership.

Heather Nowak and Lyn English spoke about how peer work had been professionalised and that there was a clear understanding of peer work, not just in relation to one-to-one support, but also in relation to advocacy and leadership. There were also peer workers in all general practices, with peer work coming under Medicare so anyone seeking health care would be able to talk with their GP and a peer worker with relevant lived experience. As well as peer work training and qualifications, there would be professional development for peer workers and opportunities to specialise. Peer workers would not be viewed as 'less than', but as just as, if not more important than clinical and other supports. And finally, peers working alongside others as a valued part of services and seriously being listened to for their understanding of mental health.

John Yusuf spoke about the new supports and opportunities available to young carers. This vision comes from his own experiences of being quite 'burnt out' by the time he realised he was a carer (at 17 years old), and then reaching out for support at the age of 20 years. In his current work as a young carer support planner John sees how many young people go to school each day carrying the load of that stress, themselves at risk of developing mental health concerns. In 2033 we now realise the impact on young carers, are willing to talk about it in the community and there are more services available. And finally, that as a community we encourage and support community members and everyone knows that it's okay to seek support.

Louise Stone spoke about her experience and what she learned as a doctor in a little country town. One of her key learnings is that it's not about curing disease but understanding that people do suffer. In 2033 we are less obsessed with the concept of cure. We can look 'unfixable suffering' in the face and not run. This type of work needs to be valued and reflected in the Government's schedule of fees paid to doctors. In 2033 people are not coming back because they are recovered not because they can't stand a system that invalidates them.



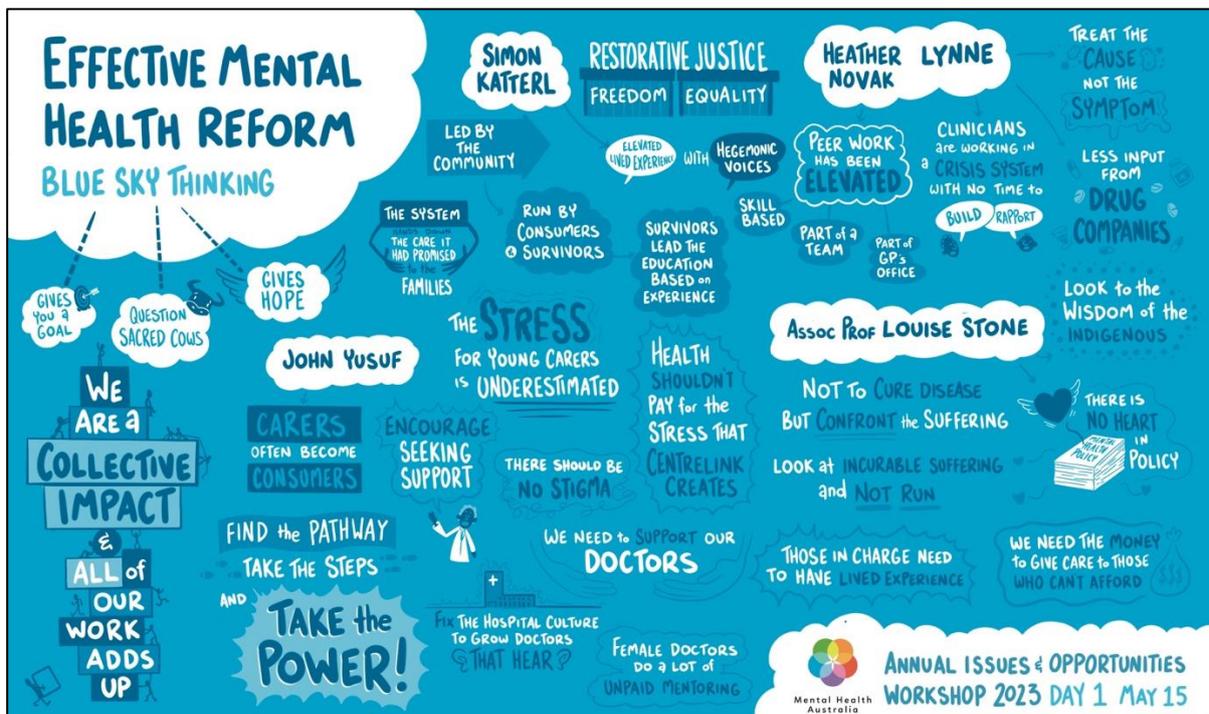
"This will necessarily be a political platform... the state would apologise, and there would be reparations for harm done by systems that were meant to help." (Simon Katterl)

*"Peers working alongside others as a valued part of services and seriously being listened to for their understanding of mental health."
(Heather Nowak and Lyn English)*

"As a community we encourage and support community members and everyone knows that it's okay to seek support" (John Yusuf)

"We get caught up with the glitter of cure. There's no prize for the fabulous aged care worker who provides comfort. Those who look unfixable suffering in the face and don't run. This sort of work is not valued in the same way." (Louise Stone)

Workshop participants appreciated the perspectives, and particularly commented on the value of hearing from a general practitioner. One person noted that they would have liked to explore this further in small groups and have the opportunity for some 'big sky thinking and actions' themselves.

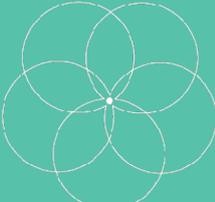


Reflections

79% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the Big Sky Thinking Panel.

"This was a great session to start us off with."

"Top shelf panel members."



Meeting the new Mental Health Australia CEO, Carolyn Nikoloski, CEO Mental Health Australia

Carolyn Nikoloski, CEO, Mental Health Australia

"I will draw on my values - respect, integrity, accountability, equity and compassion."

Having been in role for just five weeks, Carolyn identified three things she particularly wanted to share with the group: why I'm here, what I hope to achieve, and what you can expect from me.

Carolyn wants to ensure that people with lived and living experience are at the heart of the mental health system and driving the improvements in the system - to have a sector that changes things, is respected and valued and influences good public policy.

Carolyn is committed to doing all she can to influence tangible improvements that will impact right now and set up for long term change, informed by Mental Health Australia's stakeholders.

"We can't improve mental health without a human rights lens."

"There is so much research out there that is not implemented. How can we do that? And how do we identify the questions we still need to answer? We need both short and long-term focus."

Key themes raised by workshop participants:

- Lived experience experts work at all levels of services, including peer operated services.
- Is investment going into the right places?
- The importance of peer support across the board, including through NDIS.
- The need to drive improvements for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

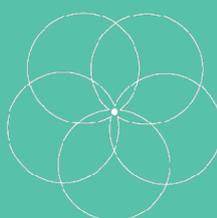
Reflections

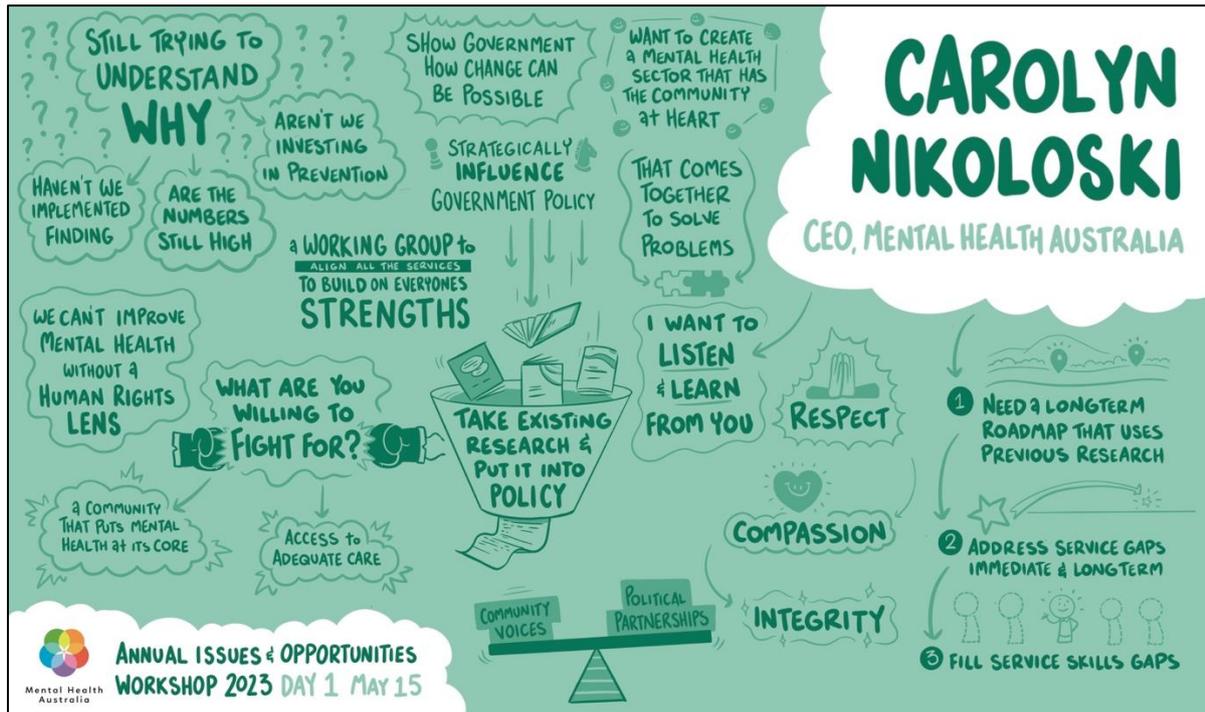
96% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Carolyn's presentation.

"Great to have the CEO in attendance for the full workshop."

"Looking forward to seeing where MHA goes with her stewardship."

"Important to hear from the new CEO... I would be keen to hear from her again a year on."





Voices in Action – Key Updates from Members

Five members from the NMHCCF, the National Register and Embrace presented on areas in which they are involved and passionate.

Naseema Mustapha – Embrace

Naseema spoke about Global Community Development Initiatives, which she founded, and which has expanded to work across seven African nations. Naseema’s own mental health journey and lived experience has been a significant driving factor for her.

Helen Day – NMHCCF

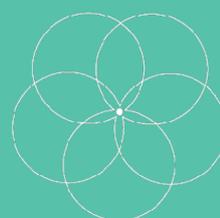
Helen presented on the Top End Mental Health Consumers Organisation (TEMHCO) in the Northern Territory. TEMHCO is the only consumer driven organisation in the Northern Territory and has been operating since 1999.

Fay Jackson – National Register

Fay spoke about people with lived experience claiming their leadership: “I want to encourage you all to take on the mantle of leadership. You are all here, so you are leaders, but I really want to encourage you to claim this. We have taken too much the mantle of survivorship.”

Ailsa Rayner – National Register

Ailsa spoke about a Mental Health Training Project that is seeking to understand how lawyers should work with people experiencing poor mental health, distress, or suicidality.



Patricia Sutton – National Register

Pat presented on why she continues to sit on committees as part of advocacy work with families. Pat focussed on her own family experience, the impact of the lack of access to NDIS and related supports and the many barriers faced by people with cognitive disabilities.



Workshop – Application and Expressions of Interest Writing

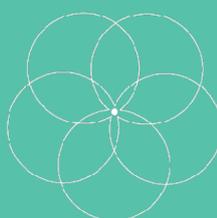
Lorraine Powell, member of National Register and Mental Health Independent Consumer Consultant

Heather Nowak, Consumer Representative National Consumer and Carer Forum

This workshop aimed to assist participants to gain confidence and enhance skills required for writing applications for consumer/carer positions on national groups and committees.

The workshop focussed on:

- Identifying if it's the right position for you
- Identifying and addressing the criteria of skills and knowledge
- How applications are assessed
- Common errors made in applications.



Reflections

All workshop survey respondents who attended the Application and EOI writing session reported being very satisfied or satisfied.

"Well run, interactive and I learnt a lot."

"Very informative. Thank you!"

Workshop – Active Listening

Maud Vanhoutte, Head of Training, New Reflections

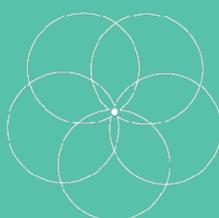
Hearing is a sensory experience that provides meaning on different levels. Listening is a voluntary activity, one where we can decide how we engage in it. As for many soft skills, listening skills can be developed. There is no quick fix, it will require focus, discipline, and the willingness to learn and improve. The listening skills workshop, aimed to assist participants to develop their ability to concentrate on the speaker's words to discern what is being communicated on multiple levels and create positive relationships with colleagues, and stakeholders.

Reflections

80% of workshop survey respondents who attended the Active Listening session reported being very satisfied or satisfied.

"One of the best communication workshops I've attended."

"Excellent presenter and role-play. Great content. Fun."



Panel – Reviews and Commissions Effecting Change.

Lisa Paul, AO, PSM, Co-Chair National Disability Insurance Scheme Review
Michael Burge AM, Consumer Advocate, National Register member

Lisa Paul

Lisa co-chairs the National Disability Insurance Scheme Review with Bruce Bonyhady AM. The NDIS Review panel also includes Judy Brewer AO, Kevin Cocks AM, Kirsten Deane OAM, Dr Stephen King and Dougie Herd. All panel members come from the sector, and they are really committed to listening to the voice of lived experience. The review must finish by October 2023.

The panel used the first six months listening to the thousands of stakeholders, including people with a lived experience and family / carers. During the next six months, the panel seek to hear about ideas for solutions: how can the scheme work better for people with psychosocial disability?

The extent of participants in the scheme having psychosocial issues are a larger number than is recognised. Lisa confirmed that psychosocial disability will remain in the scheme. It was noted that co-occurring conditions are not well catered within the scheme.

Lisa stressed the importance of hearing stories and encouraged people to get in contact with the review and that all stories will be confidential and treated with care.

“Just look up ndisreview.gov.au There are multiple ways of connecting with us.”

Michael Burge

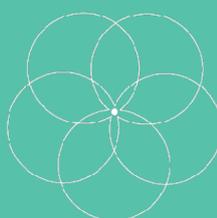
Michael spoke about The Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans Suicide. Michael stated his concern that the Royal Commission is appears to be running without adequate co-design from people with lived experience.

More than 1,200 Australian Defence Force (ADF) vets and serving personnel have died by suicide in the past two decades. Organisational culture is significant factor. Having mental health issues recognised involves lengthy and prohibitive application processes and adequate support is not provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs or other organisations.

The Royal Commission will inquire into systemic issues and common themes related to Defence and veteran death by suicide. However, some veterans are not comfortable engaging in this process through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Key themes raised by workshop participants:

- Noted similarities between NDIS and Department of Veterans Affairs in terms of traumatisation by systems.
- It was suggested that the NDIS Review Panel provide a themed list of the problems to help facilitate good quality suggestions about solutions and involve groups in the process of developing solutions collectively and not just individually.
- The NDIS Review Panel report will first go to Bill Shorten before going public. Questions were raised about implementation, monitoring and reporting of the recommendations.



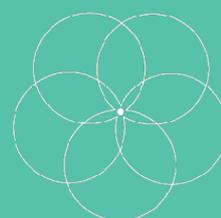
- The Review Panel needs to consider how people who have multiple disabilities experience the NDIS process and how these impacts – NDIS needs a whole of life, whole of person and whole of household approach.
- Difficulty for peer worker providers to afford the audits needed to register as an NDIS provider. This is something the panel is aware of and encourages stakeholders to write to them about this.

Reflections

71% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the Reviews and Commissions Effecting Change panel.

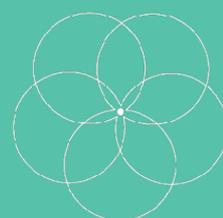
“Fantastic NDIS Review co-chair attended and open for questions.”

“There was much more overlap between NDIA & DVA than I expected, these topics went surprisingly well together. Really good to hear a veteran perspective, that the Royal Commission is not getting as much coverage as NDIS does.”



Day 2: Friday 6 May 2022

9:30	Welcome back and updates
9:40	Coming together activity
10:00	Working together better – panel discussion
10:50	Morning tea
11:20	Workshop – Reinvigorating leadership with our lived experience say of being
12:30	Lunch
1:30	What inclusion means – panel discussion
2:10	Peer Soap Box
2:30	Announcements and capturing emerging issues
2:45	Afternoon tea
3:15	Inspirations speaker – Emma Grey
3:45	A word from the Secretariat
3:50	Wrapping up and close of the workshop



Panel Discussion - Working Better Together

Sara Stanley, Senior Disability Advocate and Team Leader with ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS)

Juanita Koeijers, a research collaborator with the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and National Register consumer representative

Susan Adam, National Register Carer Representative

Sara Stanley

ADACAS promotes and protects the rights of people with disability, people experiencing mental ill-health, older people and their carers. Sara described how ADACAS is able to bridge a gap between the person with a disability and various other clinicians, services and supports, who then collectively workshop an agreement for supporting the person.

Juanita Koeijers

Juanita provided an overview of drug use in Australia and noted that the mental health and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sectors have not been working well together.

Due to illegality, people who use drugs are highly stigmatised.

Juanita emphasised the importance of peer work and the need to focus on supporting and training AOD peer workers whom people can trust.

“We need to support AOD peer networks because that is where people go.”

Susan Adams

Susan’s presentation focussed on improving outcomes for older people living with mental health concerns. She noted that there is a separation of mental health and aged care across policy, practice, and services. We need to ensure collaboration between mental health and aged care for better outcomes and more inclusive approaches.

Moving forward we need identification and intervention, training and education, accessible mental health service, family / carer support, stigma reduction, encouragement of social engagement, telehealth services and ongoing research and evaluation.

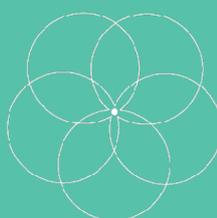
“Socialisation is essential. In Mornington, we now have a place they can all come together that is next to the Aged Care Service.”

Reflections

71% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Working Better Together Panel.

“Speakers were good but would have liked to explore this more in small groups.”

“Insightful.”





Workshop – Reinvigorating Leadership with Lived Experience Ways of Being

Erandathie Jayakody, member of the Independent Panel to Review Compulsory Treatment Criteria and Alignment of Decision-Making Laws in Victoria and board member at Mind Australia.

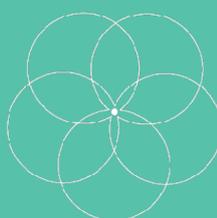
Flick Grey, independent consultant, trainer, supervisor, and researcher, member of the Independent Panel to Review Compulsory Treatment Criteria and Alignment of Decision-Making Laws in Victoria.

“How do I want to lead in this context, who am I doing this for? How do we do leadership in order to do the change work that we are here for?”

Flick and Erandathie shared key questions, reflections and considerations that continue to arise in their own leadership journeys

- How do I want to lead in this context?
- Who am I doing this for?
- How do we do leadership in order to do the change work that we are here for?
- How do we engage with each other so we can really understand? Especially when we don’t agree, which can be hard.

“Centring lived experience is not about marginalising other voices... It is about elevating lived experience, so it has the same validity as the established voices.”



Reflections

87% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Flick and Erandathie's presentation.

"Radical. Critical. Innovative."

"Brilliant presentation ... highly informative and educational."



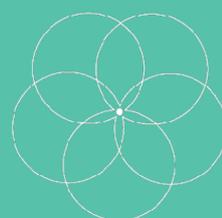
Panel discussion – What inclusion means – Embrace Group

Imelita Iia-Norris, Naseema Mustapha, Nicholas Castagnette, John Yusuf

This panel question and answer session explored the group's diverse understandings and experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Themes included:

- Workplace support
- Being able to stand out but fit in
- Finding people you can relate to
- No one is left behind
- Accepting a person as they are without expecting or wishing them to change
- Learning the correct pronunciation of names that may not have been familiar to you

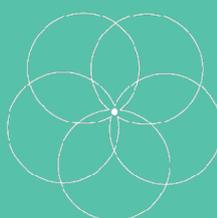


Reflections

91% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Embrace Group's presentation.

"I believe this session requires a longer slot, half day or even a full workshop to help the group delve deeper on certain topics."

"This session made really good use of lived experience storytelling to help me to question my own biases and prejudices, without leaving me feeling defensive."



Peer Soap Box

Workshop participants were invited to give a short presentation on a topic of their choice, as a way to share news and opportunities and thoughts of interest to their peers.

Presentations were:

Eileen McDonald - Multi Institutional Agreement

Peter Heggie - Carers in Australia

Lorraine Powell - Trauma Informed Practice

Julie Anderson – Inpatient Units

Reflections

75% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the Peer Soap Box session.

“Truthful.”

“Great initiative.”

Inspirational Speaker – Emma Grey

Emma Grey is the internationally published author of five books, including the romantic comedy, *The Last Love Note*, which she wrote in the wake of her husband’s death. The novel is an attempt to capture the magnitude of her loss and a life-affirming commitment to hope. Emma has lived experience of depression and is the mother of three wonderful children, each of whom experience anxiety and panic disorder. Emma shared some of her experiences of weaving light through the darkness, as she continues to overcome life’s challenges.

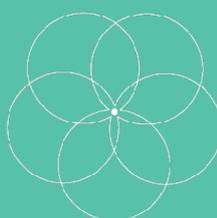
“When you stare into the darkness for years, the light can surprise you.”

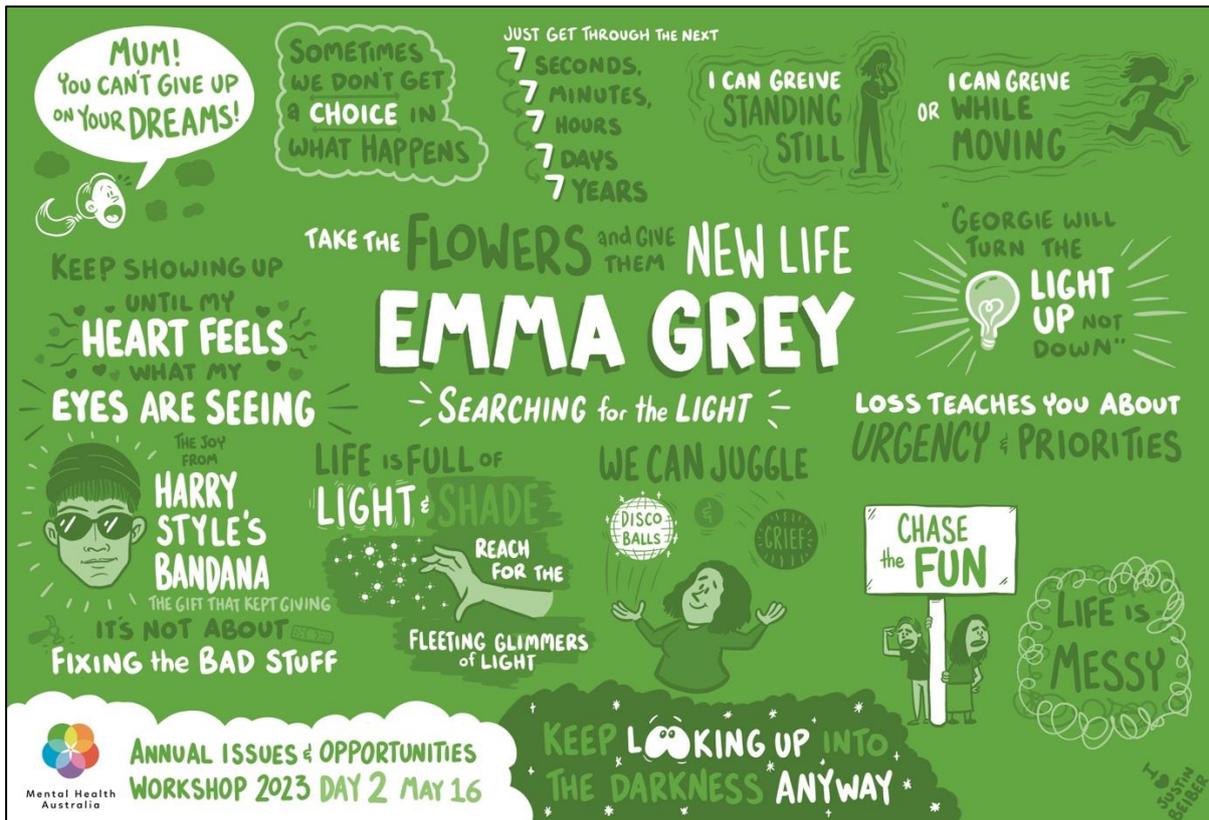
Reflections

100% of workshop evaluation survey respondents present at this session reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Emma’s presentation.

“Overwhelmed. Heartfelt. Humorous. Generous. Inspiration. HOPE.”

“Very inspirational - a great way to finish.”





Conclusion

The 2023 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop provided an opportunity for member of the National Register, National Mental Health Consumer and Care Forum and the Embraced Lived Experience group to network and learn from each other and invited guests.

The workshop theme Working together, leading change. Lived experience leadership, unity, diversity, human rights, and advocacy provided a broad platform for a range of diverse speakers and through provoking discussions.

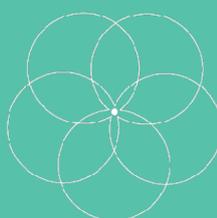
79% of survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the 2023 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop.

Overall Reflections

“Brilliant collection and mix of speakers/format. Congrats to the organising committee.”

“It was great to come together in person and strengthen connections.”

“My first time attending. I've learnt a lot about PHN's, Carer Networks, etc. There are so many things I had no idea about. Thank you for an eye-opening workshop!”



More information

For more information, please contact the Lived Experience Team at Mental Health Australia on 02 6285 3100 or at natreg@mhaustralia.org

