

Title: Living' Lived Experience Leadership - A conversation

Symposium: 2024 TheMHS Conference

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Mental Health Reform in Action: From Co-design to Consumer Leadership

"Lived experience work will be a central pillar to of the future of the mental health system: new lived experience roles will be established and supported, spanning service design and delivery, service and system leadership, research and evaluation, and system accountability and oversight."

State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Interim Report

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health system recommended that the Victorian Government establishes Victoria's first residential mental health service designed and delivered by people with lived experience, in coproduction with people with lived experience. Government funding has supported two stages of codesign which has resulted in the development of a bespoke 'Philosophy of Healing' and changes in practice guidelines, but operational funding is now required to commence delivery of the service. A metropolitan site with an existing facility has been secured to deliver the new service, which is in need of significant refurbishment to meet the Royal Commission's requirements for a 'home-like' environment.

Mental health reform is a complex and challenging undertaking. Co-production and consumer leadership are critical approaches that are being used to reform mental health care. By working together on common ground, consumers, providers, policymakers and loved ones, can create a system of care that is more responsive to the needs of all individuals.

Central to its success is that people with lived experience of mental distress not only have a voice in the design and delivery of services but have genuine leadership within these processes. Co-design is just one activity within the spectrum of lived experience leadership, not the process itself. Consumer leadership goes a step further, where people with personal lived experience take on leadership roles in the planning, implementation, delivery and evaluation of mental health services.

The project's processes, structures, partnerships and decision making has continuously evolved in response to organisational, policy and legislative drivers, and the differing expertise required across the project's phases since work began in July 2021.

We will open this symposium by providing an overview of how the project has been continuously reshaped over time. This includes a focus on when the primary responsibility for model design and implementation transferred from the Department of Health to its funded partner, Mind Australia, which leads a consortium that includes Alfred Mental and Addiction Health.

The panel presenting this symposium topic represents the consumer leadership, community mental health service delivery, clinical service delivery, legal and academic, and government policy perspectives that have a bearing on the project's methods and outcomes.

Broader concepts of codesign, consumer leadership, governance, power sharing, and innovation as critical enablers will be explored as a way of setting the scene before panel examination of the issue of anti-ligature vs non anti-ligature in the built environment, and its implications for a peer-governed and delivered healing model.

Finally, the panel will respond to questions from the floor about how 'sticking points' in codesign and coproduction can be understood and responded to pro-actively in a multi-partner collaboration that is committed to centring consumer leadership.

Attendees at the symposium will come away with an appreciation of the challenging and complex nature of innovation at this level, and a deeper understanding of how to identify and resolve obstacles that might threaten the integrity of a consumer-led design process. Participants will none-the-less be left with strong message of encouragement to plan for and embark on coproduction projects themselves, with a sense of promise that learning together on common ground can not only produce good service outcomes, but also revitalise old relationships and forge new enduring partnerships.