

**Title:** Addressing family and carer lived experience workforce challenges in regional and rural Victoria

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Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect Centres offer a new family and carer-led support for the families, carers, kin and supporters of people who experience mental ill-health and/or substance use challenges. The Centres are a recommendation of the Victorian Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, with Mind Australia leading the establishment of two Centres in regional and rural areas in Victoria.

Recruiting a trained family and carer lived experience workforce presented a challenge as this workforce is not well established in community-based settings, especially in rural and regional areas. Due to geographical barriers to accessing training and professional development opportunities, we designed a program to support staff to turn their lived experience into expertise and deliver safe and quality support to families and carers.

This presentation will outline the implementation of a comprehensive training and development program, informed by the National Lived Experience Workforce Guidelines. The training includes: foundational training in social connection, relational recovery, and Intentional Peer Support, as well as Carer Perspective Supervision and co-reflection. Process related outcomes from the training program will be presented. The impact of this regional and rural training and development program will be further evaluated to understand family and carer lived experience practice.