



The Consumer Workforce Forum is jointly hosted by:



thecollab.org.au/consumer-workforce-forum-2025



Advocacy with, by, and for consumers

VMIAC is the peak Victorian non-government organisation for people with lived experience as consumers of mental health services. We work from a rights-based perspective.

Our vision is a world where all mental health consumers stand proud, live a life with choices honoured, rights upheld, and these principles are embedded in all aspects of society.



Find out more:
vmiac.org.au



Keynote Speakers

Ted Johnston



TAGALAKA | TAEPITHIGGI |
INTERSECTIONAL ADVISORY & ADVOCACY
| FIRST PEOPLES + LIVED EXPERIENCE +
LIVED EXPERTISE + WELLBEING

DAY: MONDAY 18 AUGUST

***Ted is a proud Tagalaka and
Taepithiggi person – a Queer,
Neurodivergent, and First
Nations person***

KEYNOTE L.L.E.M.O.N

Ted is a proud Tagalaka and Taepithiggi person – a Queer, Neurodivergent, and First Nations person from the Gulf of Carpentaria, Far North Queensland. He has lost many loved ones to suicide, including his brother, and is a suicide survivor himself. He brings the heart of his lived experience and systems expertise into his work as a senior public servant, striving to make systems kinder and more just for marginalised communities. His career spans social policy, criminal justice, justice reform, mental health, and Aboriginal self-determination, alongside a strong pursuit of knowledge and understanding across law, sociology, gender, sexuality, and feminism.

Ted's perspective on mental health is that First Peoples' experiences are grounded in wellbeing yet shaped by a lived experience of systemic exclusion through cultural and racial marginalisation, identity politics, colonial definitions, and community dynamics. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often experience poorer mental health outcomes, yet we are seen anecdotally adjacent to consumer and carer movements – movements that move on stolen land.

TED KEYNOTE IS THANKS TO MAJOR SPONSOR
VMIAC

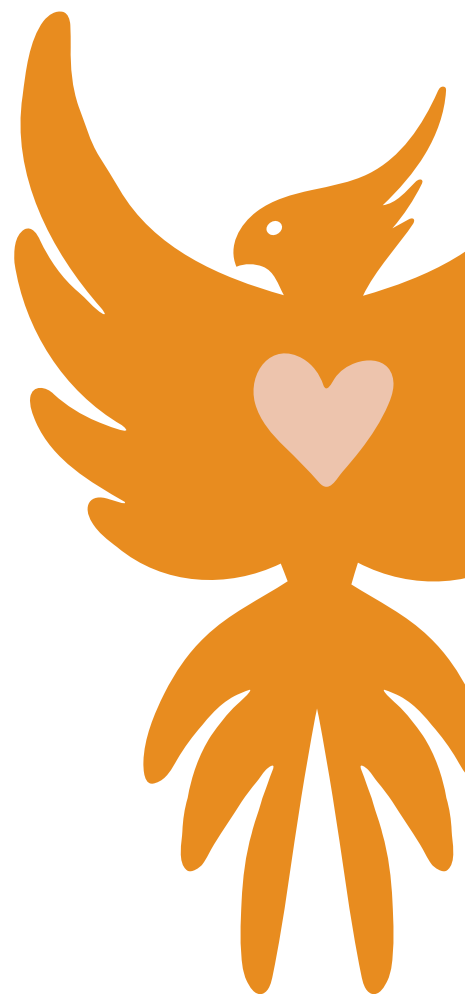
Having held multiple identified and designated roles working from lived experience, Ted has navigated challenges that impact social and emotional wellbeing and extend beyond the mental health sector. First Peoples are oppressed by multiple competing social theories – from the historical, political, cultural, and social determinants of mental health to the ways Aboriginal people assert, negotiate, and defend identity while navigating survival, recognition, and sovereignty.

From Treaty to the Voice, connection to culture, adverse childhood experiences, intergenerational trauma, racism, and homophobia – not all First Peoples lead from the same perspective, and not all of us hold cultural authority. Yet many of us employ our Lived Expertise every day, across contexts, and it all ties back to wellbeing. We are leaders doing leadership, often under different names, like ‘obligation’ and ‘responsibility’. If we ask, “What do Aboriginal folk need to be leaders?”, we must also ask, “What must be dismantled so Aboriginal folk can lead?”

Our Discipline, Our Knowledge, Our Strength is something we define and employ individually and collectively, but it’s not confined to the public mental health system.

Ted Johnston takes an intersectional approach, unpacking and reflecting on First Peoples + Lived Experience + Lived Expertise + Wellbeing.

Ted will provide us with an opportunity to listen to the knowledge formed from their years of leadership in the workforce and their intersectional perspectives and see how it can transform our ways of knowing, being and doing.



Keynote Speakers

Eila Lyon



DAY: MONDAY 18 AUGUST

Since 2008, Eila has been a dedicated leader in the Consumer Perspective Workforce

KEYNOTE

The Getting of Wisdom: Reflections on a Journey to Consumer Perspective

Since 2008, Eila has been a dedicated leader in the Consumer Perspective Workforce, working across peer roles, consultancy, governance, education and more. Now a Workforce Development Coordinator, she continues to support and strengthen the sector across Victoria.

Eila's journey began with a leap of faith — and a whole lot of heart. Since then, she's grown alongside some of the most inspiring Consumer Perspective practitioners and community members across Victoria.

When she's not championing workforce development, Eila's happiest in regional Victoria with her beloved furry crew of cats, sheep... and yes, alpacas. We are thrilled to have Eila presenting at this year's event.

EILA'S KEYNOTE IS THANKS TO MAJOR SPONSOR
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THE COLLAB 2025



**CENTRE FOR
MENTAL HEALTH
NURSING**

Coproducing excellent practice.

Dr. Haley Peckham's Neuroplastic Narrative Exclusive Collab Offer

**Book In-Person Training for Your Organisation
Now only \$1000!**

As part of The Collab 2025, we're offering organisations the chance to book one of two full-day, workshops for a special discounted rate of \$1000 each (normally \$1300).

Designed for teams of 30–40 participants, these sessions are ideal for building trauma-informed, neuro-aware and shame-competent practice in your workforce.

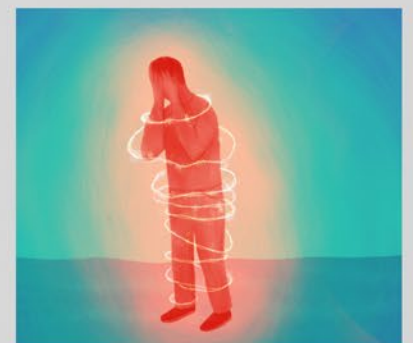
Life History and Neuroplasticity: Advancing ACE-Aware, Trauma-Informed Mental Health Practice

- Explore how early life experiences shape the brain and behaviour, and learn how neuroplasticity offers a pathway to healing and resilience in mental health care.



Shame Competence for Trauma-Informed Practitioners

- Build practical skills in recognising, responding to, and reducing shame in therapeutic and organisational settings—essential for safe, effective trauma-informed care.



**Visit The CentreMHN
booth to book now.**

Only available to attendees who sign up at The Collab!
Tailored for organisations across health, education, and community services
Available for delivery in metro and regional areas

Special Events

Welcome to Country Perry Wandin, Wurundjeri Man



DAY: MONDAY 18 AUGUST
TIME: 10:00am
LOCATION: DANVERS ROOM

Perry Wandin a proud Wurundjeri man, cultural heritage officer at Wurundjeri tribe land council.

Great, great, great nephew of William Barak and son of James Juby Wandin, Perry's home is in Healesville, near the community site that was Coranderrk.

Perry has been supporting and Welcoming the Collab attendees since 2018.

Wellness Room Activities

Consumer Workforce Forum can contain content that may be sensitive and sometimes distressing to conference participants. We have set up two spaces where participants can either sit quietly or participate in an activity to take a break from the conference atmosphere.

Chill Out Space

DAY: MONDAY 18 AUGUST

TIME: ALL DAY

LOCATION: DANVERS ROOM,
LEVEL 2

THE CHILL OUT SPACE IS THANKS
TO MAJOR SPONSORS: CENTRE
FOR MENTAL HEALTH NURSING



Program

Abstract Presentations

DEB CARLON, SENIOR CONSULTANT LIVED EXPERIENCE (MIND AUSTRALIA);

KATIE LARSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LIVED EXPERIENCE (MIND AUSTRALIA);

TREVOR HUNT, MANAGER OF LIVED EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS (MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH)

Trevor Hunt is the Manager of Lived Experience Programs and Policy in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division, Department of Health. Trevor leads a team that has responsibility for the implementation of Royal Commission recommendations relating to lived experience services and entities, where he strives towards the principles of coproduction as a committed and aspiring ally. His current priorities include the establishment of the Healing Place, implementation of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect center's, and finalising the Lived and Living Experience Leadership strategic framework for release.

Katie Larsen (she/they) is the Executive Director Lived Experience at Mind Australia. Katie works from a lived expertise and social justice perspective, drawing from her own lived experience of mental health and wellbeing challenges and LGBTIQ+ identity. At Mind, Katie leads the delivery of Mind's Lived Experience Strategy, and provides lived expertise leadership in the development of peer led service models. Katie is a PhD Candidate at Deakin University researching intersectional leadership and decision-making in mainstream mental health services. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Journalism) and Master of Social Work.

Deb Carlon has extensive experience working from a consumer expertise perspective to inform her systemic advocacy and leadership roles. She

has a proven track record of managing complex projects, that includes using co-production to challenge systems of power in the mental health sector. Having held leadership positions within the sector, Deb is experienced in developing programs and services from a consumer perspective. Deb is employed at Mind within the Lived Experience Division as the Senior Lived Experience Consultant. Deb has led the development of the Healing Place where we are working to bring Love, Connection and Community into the foundations of the Lived Experience Directed, Developed Designed and Delivered services. History, Imagination, Innovation and Heart underpin our work.

The Healing Place Journey from Then to Now

Abstract: Objective: The audience will have an understanding of the history of the Healing Place and how the community/movement and Allies shaped the journey.

Join us as we explore the journey of the first Victorian consumer Directed, Designed and Developed Healing Place over the past years. The presentation will explore the highs and the lows, the consumer-leadership and co-production process and how community not just here in Victoria but nationally and New Zealand has influenced our path. Taking time to acknowledge the support of Allies, as well as those who have gone before and the path, they have laid for us. From Vision to solid foundations and a glimmer of hope for the future.

- A place without bars on the windows
- No obstacle course at the door.
- Furniture not bolted down
- A place with personality
- To be, To heal, To grow

-
- A chance at getting things manageable
 - A team that works with you
 - No forced options
 - No arguing for basic rights
 - A real chance at getting better

– *Possum Life*

**LEO PORTILLO, LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKFORCE
TEAM LEADER (EASTERN HEALTH)**

Leo Portillo is a Lived Experience Workforce Team Leader at Eastern Health, working across the Access and Rehabilitation services. I draw on my own mental health journey to lead, advocate, and push for systemic change within the sector. My focus is on strengthening the lived experience workforce, breaking down silos, and building genuine collaboration with clinical teams. Through writing and leadership, I aim to elevate lived experience as vital, strategic, and powerful in transforming mental health care.

**Our Discipline, Our Knowledge, Our Strength:
Honouring the Power of Lived Experience**

It's time to recognize the transformative force of the Lived Experience workforce in mental health—those who turn survival into strategy, personal truth into collective wisdom, and pain into power. This is a rallying cry for a movement, not a moment. Lived Experience is not just a voice in the room; it's a disciplined, ethical, and strategic practice grounded in integrity and accountability. It's a knowledge born from surviving systems that weren't designed for us, from fighting to be heard and creating new ways of healing in the community. And it's a strength that refuses to shrink—choosing collective care over competition, and insisting that transformation is not

optional, but essential.

This is a workforce not of “nice to haves,” but of necessity—those who refuse to let systems dilute their practice or dismiss their expertise. The call is clear: to protect the integrity of this work, to honour the knowledge that saves lives, and to build bridges across all sectors of care. The Lived Experience movement is the foundation of what's next—and it's time for the world to catch up.

What will you do to stand with us in this fight?



Abstract Presentations

ANNA GOULD, CONSUMER CONSULTANT, ALFRED MENTAL AND ADDICTION HEALTH (AMAH)

Anna Gould is a lived experience practitioner and currently works at Alfred Mental and Addiction Health (AMAH) as a Consumer Consultant. She is also the Co-Chair of Consumer and Carer Council – Frankston Local, Victoria, a governance role with Wellways Australia, following her participation in the 2022 VMIAC Consumers in Governance Pilot Program. She brings expertise of mental health challenges, chronic illness, and over 25 years' experience in peer support. In 2021 she was awarded an Alfred Health Recognising Excellence Award for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Anna has expertise in lived experience leadership, governance, education. Anna is currently completing a lived and living experience workforce scholarship and is the recipient of a Mental Health Victoria Grant. She has consulted to government, not for profit, and other health organisations. Anna was formerly involved in the Community Reference Group at Victorian Pride Centre, Melbourne. Anna has worked with inside out and associates co-ordinating the Consumer Perspective Supervision Framework Project. In her everyday life she enjoys reading, walking, and cooking something delicious to share!

Consumer Perspective Supervision: Our Discipline's Essential Knowledge for Consumer Workers

Consumer Perspective Supervision training is essential knowledge for creating a better mental health system which includes the consumer workforce.

inside out and associates are engaged by the Department of Health Victoria to deliver the Consumer Perspective Supervision Course to consumer workers in designated lived experience roles in VIC.

In 2024 I completed the CPS training and as part of the coursework, wrote an essay/paper on why consumer perspective supervision is essential for consumer workers.

In this presentation I will draw from my paper entitled: Consumer Perspective Supervision: Why it is essential for addressing systemic issues and safe work practices for consumer workers.

I will share what I learnt in the CPS course and argue that best practice lived experience workforces need access to discipline specific supervision to create a better mental health system by 2050, and safer environment for workers in the consumer workforce. This includes roles such as peer workers, consultants, educators, advisors, researchers, team leaders etc.

There are multiple hazards for consumer workers to navigate in the workplace, many of which can be addressed in supervision with a consumer perspective supervision (CPS) supervisor. We are here to stay!

REBECCA LANGMAN, DIRECTOR OF CONSUMER LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE MENTAL AND ADDICTION HEALTH (ALFRED HEALTH)

Rebecca Langman is a consumer lived experience leader in public mental health services. She is the Director of Consumer Lived Experience at Alfred Mental and Addiction Health. Previously, Rebecca worked on Kaurua Land as the Coordinator Consumer Engagement & Lived Experience for the Central Adelaide Local Health Network's Mental Health Clinical Program. She was a Board Member and Deputy Chair on the LELAN board, South Australia's peak body for people with lived experience.

Rebecca has worked as a Peer Worker in public

hospital and community environments. She has a Bachelor of Media Arts majoring in Performing Arts & Film/TV Production and a Bachelor of Psychological Science from the University of South Australia. Her special interests include early intervention, crisis alternatives, peer support, experiences of trauma, outdoor/adventure therapy and access to emergency care.

A firm believer in 'nothing about us without us', Rebecca is excited to walk alongside consumers, carers and clinicians on the journey of reform with the ultimate aim of a world where mental health care is recovery-focused, strengths-based and trauma informed.

Exploring Trauma Informed Alternatives to 'Performance Management' for Consumer Workers

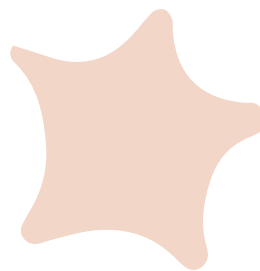
This emerging project begins with a question: what would it look like to reimagine 'performance management' through a trauma-informed, lived experience lens? As a lived experience leader in public mental health, services, and someone with experience of growing up with a parent navigating the punitive WorkCover system while living with mental illness and physical injury, I am interested in exploring new ways of supporting consumer workers to thrive in their roles.

I'm interested in how consumer workers experience traditional 'performance management' and particularly those that found it harmful, and what they would imagine instead. I want to understand the emotional, professional, and systemic impacts of these processes, and begin a conversation about more relational, strengths-based, and care-centered alternatives.

In my role as a lived experience leader in public mental health, I've observed how traditional performance management processes by clinical managers and Human Resources departments can

feel unsafe, punitive, and misaligned with the values of lived experience. For consumer workers, being "managed" through informal and formal processes can rupture trust, reinforce power imbalances, and cause lasting harm to wellbeing, confidence, and career trajectory.

If this exploratory, curious conversation resonates with the consumer workforce, I hope to co-design a research project that honours those experiences of harm, creates space for new approaches, and explores how organisations can better support consumer workers to thrive in their roles.



Abstract Presentations

SHAY ELLIOT, CONSUMER WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT EDUCATOR (THE COLLECTIVE)

Shay Eliot (they/them) is a lived and living experience worker passionate about connection, shared learning, and grassroots movement building. Over the past few years, Shay has been creating and holding spaces where people can show up authentically, learn together, and support each other in their work. Their presentation will explore the value of Communities of Practice (CoPs) in building strong, accessible networks grounded in lived experience.

The Power of Communities of Practice: Growing Connection Through Learning

As the consumer workforce grows in strength and expertise, we need environments that support continuous learning, reflective practice, and collective wellbeing. This presentation explores how Communities of Practice (CoPs) can be used as a sustainable approach to peer connection and continuous learning.

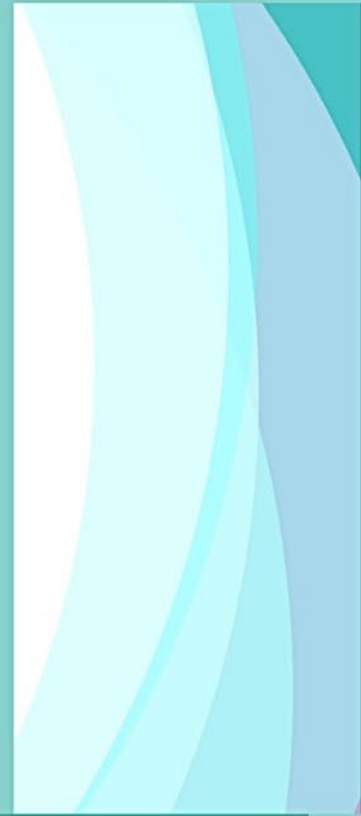
We'll explore how CoPs can:

- Foster reflective dialogue and shared purpose
- Support staff wellbeing and reduce isolation
- Strengthen peer role knowledge, quality improvement, and workforce development.

In the spirit of peer learning, the session will also include interactive elements such as barrier-busting brainstorming, reflective prompts, and practical mini-workshop activities designed to help participants imagine what's possible when we invest in connection and learning as core components of workforce development and wellbeing.



MENTAL HEALTH **CONSUMER LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKFORCE** DISCIPLINE FRAMEWORK



In March 2025, the Victorian Department of Health launched five **Lived and Living Experience Discipline Frameworks**, including the Mental Health Consumer Lived Experience Discipline Framework.

Read it here:





thecollab.org.au/consumer-workforce-forum-2025