



**Mental Health
Australia**

2022 Annual Issues & Opportunities Workshop Report

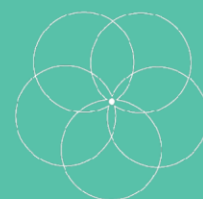
May 2022

**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). Members from the Embrace Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group were also invited to attend.

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 2022 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop was held in Melbourne on Thursday 5 and Friday 6 May 2022 and was attended by 61 mental health consumer and carer representatives. This year's workshop was conducted as a hybrid event – 52 people attended in person and 9 people joined the workshop via Zoom.

The theme “Building Courage, Strength and Resilience to Promote Change” provided a thought-provoking program and opportunities to advance participants voices as consumers and carers.

An evaluation survey was sent to all participants following the 2022 Workshop, which 28% of attendees responded to. These responses have helped gauge the level of participant satisfaction with each workshop session as well as participants' reflections and insights.

This report provides highlights from the two-day event and a summary of the key themes raised by mental health consumers and carers during the workshop sessions or through the subsequent workshop evaluation survey.

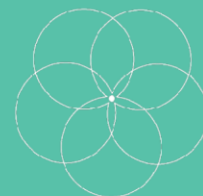
2022 Workshop Attendees

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 Embrace 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.

2022 Workshop Working Group

The 2022 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 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 room was made available to participants throughout the workshop.

The working group developed the workshop theme – “Building Courage, Strength and Resilience to Promote Change” – which provided a focus throughout the two-day event.

Working group members included:

Carli Sheers

Consumer Representative – NMHCCF and National Register Member

Suzie Adam

Carer Representative – National Register Member

Helen Day

Consumer Representative – NMHCCF Member

Nevena Simic

Consumer Representative – NMHCCF and National Register Member

Fay Jackson

Carer Representative – National Register Member

Angela Rao

Carer Representative – National Register Member

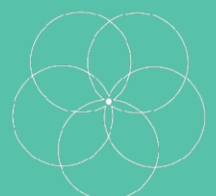


Facilitators

The facilitators for the 2022 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop were Sandy Watson and Kath Thorburn, 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.

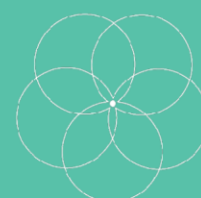
Visual / Graphic Facilitation

The workshop was captured by graphic recorder Marty Ackerly from Sketch Group. Marty captured the conversations by taking visual notes of the workshop with words and pictures. These are shown throughout this report



Day 1: Thursday 5 May 2022

10:00 – 10:05	Acknowledgement of Country
10:05 – 10:10	Acknowledgement of those that have gone before us and whose work we continue to build upon
10:10 – 10:30	Workshop welcome
10:30 – 11:15	Setting the scene – Mental health Australia Policy Update, CEO, Mental Health Australia
11:15 – 11:35	Morning tea – state and territory networking
11:35 – 12:10	Voices in action – scheduled member updates: Darren Jiggins, National Register Consumer Representative Sonia Di Mezza, National Register Carer Representative Keiran Booth, National Register Carer Representative
12:10 – 12:50	LGBTIQ+ mental health and wellbeing in sport (Jason Ball)
12:50 – 1:40	Lunch
1:40 – 3:10	Workshop – Common Cause Australia – Part 1
3:10 – 3:40	Afternoon break
3:40 – 4:40	Workshop – Common Cause Australia – Part 2
4:40 – 5:00	Capturing the wisdom from Day One - End of day announcements



Workshop Welcome

Inside out facilitated the welcome session, first focussing on workshop fundamentals such as housekeeping, supporting zoom participants, and who to go to if people had any issues during the day. Second, inside out focussed on creating and holding a safe space. Butchers paper was located on the walls, and groups were invited to write their reflections on post-it notes and then place these on butchers' paper, in relation to the following two questions:

1. How do we look after and support each other
2. What do we need to be present and to make the most of our time together?

The themes that emerged from each questions were as follows:

How do we look after ourselves and support each other?

- *Be kind & caring – to each other and ourselves*
- *Check in and consider boundaries*
- *Demonstrate real listening and hearing each other*
- *Look after ourselves*
- *Valuing different perspectives and experiences*

What do we need to be present and to make the most of our time together?

- *Avoid distraction*
- *Take breaks*
- *Connect with each other*
- *Listen respectfully*

Setting the Scene – Mental Health Australia Policy Update – Dr Leanne Beagley, CEO Mental Health Australia

“This is a ‘pinch me moment’ - finally getting together for this annual issues and opportunities workshop.”

Dr Leanne Beagley introduced the theme for the workshop and then spoke to 4 priorities:

1. Lived Experience Leadership
2. Government leadership and accountability
3. Co-designed implementation of a community focused mental health system
4. The mental health workforce

Dr Beagley spoke about the MHA Election Engagement Plan - #EveryElectionIssue. Every single election issue has a mental health component. For more information on the Mental Health Australia website, go to **Election – Issues papers**.



Dr Beagley summarised this session by returning to the key themes – courage, strength and resilience – and how they relate to promoting change, and reflected:

“Courage is when you know it’s going to be hard but you jump in anyway”.

Reflections

94% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Dr Leanne Beagley’s presentation.

“Leanne does an amazing job in covering what MHA is doing in a concise brief manner.”

“Very Informative.”

Voices in Action – Key Updates from Members

1. Darren Jiggins

Darren Jiggins presented the vision of Equally Well to “improve the physical health and wellbeing of people living with mental illness in Australia” and noted that, despite being surrounded by clinicians, people with lived experience of mental illness are much less likely to have their physical health attended to, often with serious consequences.

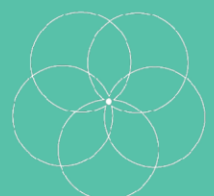
Darren’s Calls to Action

- Visit the [Equally Well Website](#) to see the consensus statement
- See if your organisation has signed up
- Watch the [video](#)
- Share on your socials

2. Sonia De Mezza

Sonia De Mezza, CEO Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services and GROW board member, spoke to the mental health challenges facing multicultural communities and what this means for us all in our work as advocates and representatives.

Sonia illustrated this using her experience in Bendigo. 25% of people living in Australia were born overseas. In Bendigo, it’s 10%. In 2015, riots occurred in Bendigo in response to plans to build a Mosque. There were also counter-protests. Additionally, at the height of unfair criticism of multicultural communities regarding the COVID-19 vaccination, the multicultural community in Bendigo had one of the highest rates of vaccination.



3. Keiran Booth

Keiran reflected on good times and making the best of tough times while working towards change in various roles as a mental health carer representative and leader.

Keiran expressed sadness at his time with the National Register coming to a close, and pride for the work done so far and conviction for the work that will be done in the future.

“It’s been an honour and a privilege.”

Reflections

82% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the Voices to Action session.

“Darren is a brilliant Speaker Orator and Advocate for many years he covered his area well.”

“Inspired by the work Sonia has done for multicultural people with mental health lived experience”

“It was absolutely nice to have an old timer speak from the heart – Kieran has done so much for MHA”

LGBTIQ+ mental health and wellbeing in sport - Jason Ball

Jason Ball is best known as a pioneering LGBTIQ advocate who in 2012 came out in the national media – a move that was hugely influential in challenging homophobia in sport and driving cultural change within the AFL. Since taking that stand, Jason has become a national figurehead on combating homophobia in sport and highlighting the damaging impact of discrimination on the mental health and wellbeing of the LGBTIQ community. In 2017, Jason was Young Australian of the Year for Victoria.¹

Jason reflected on his career in football before and after coming out, and how he has worked to tackle homophobia in sport due to the mental health impacts of homophobia and discrimination.

“Pride is the opposite of shame – shame is what so many members of the LGBT community have experienced – messages from the community about what they are.”

Jason is now an Ambassador for Beyond Blue. He highlighted that the discrimination by family, friends, and community leads to poor outcomes for LGBTIQ+ community, especially young people.

¹ www.jasonball.com.au



Reflections

81% of workshop evaluation survey respondents that attended the session reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Jason Ball's presentation.

"Very real and relatable."

Common Cause Workshop – Mark Chenery, Common Cause Australia

Common Cause Australia helps mission driven organisations use the power of values and frames to motivate change. They provide research, training and strategic support to people and organisations passionate about creating a better world.²

Building on previous work with members, Mark Chenery from Common Cause led two engaging sessions on values-based messaging.

Key points

- Everyone has similar values, just at different levels of importance which can vary at different times.
- You cannot tell someone's values by looking at their behaviours – it's about *why* we do what we do, not simply what we do.

Reflections

82% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the Common Cause Workshop session with Mark Chenery.

"Have done this before, was great to have the refresher which consolidated my learnings"

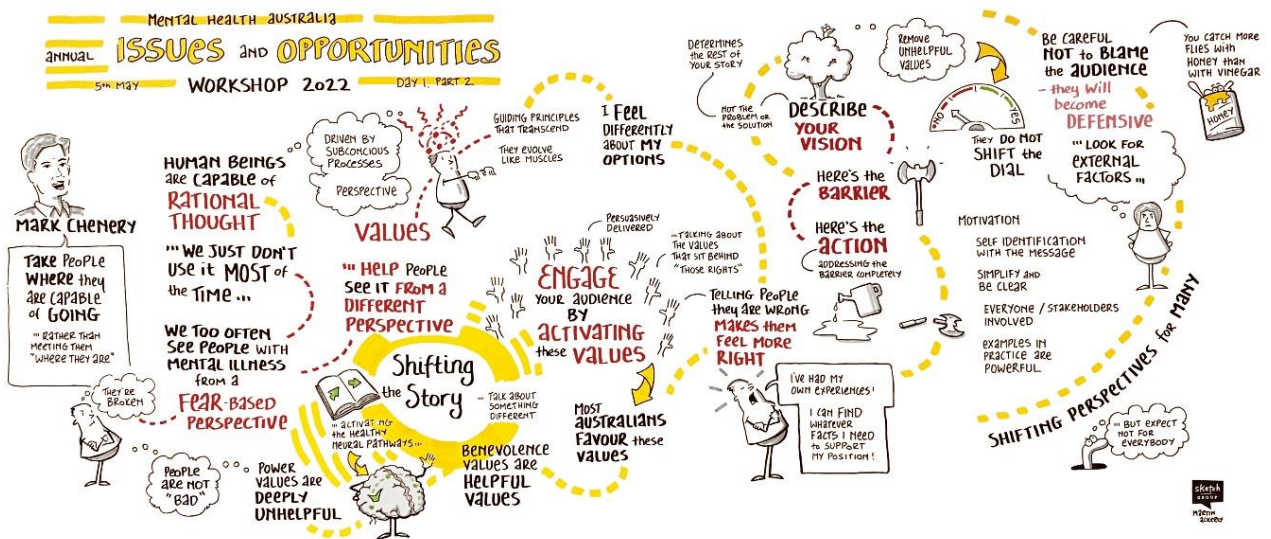
² <https://www.commoncause.com.au/>



Capturing the Wisdom from Day 1

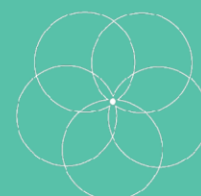
The end of day one was an opportunity to reflect on the connections (interpersonal and intellectual) that were made to build courage, strength and resilience, and how we will use this in our roles to promote change. Some of the wisdom included:

- “Translating views and perspectives through advocacy – changing the way I phrase ideas to stakeholders.”
- “The power of storytelling to highlight, influence and motivate – being more courageous in storytelling and advocating.”
- “Thinking about how I use my role to encourage people.”
- “Jump in regardless of fear!”



Day 2: Friday 6 May 2022

9:00 – 9:10	Welcome back and update
9:10 – 10:05	LELAN – Lived Experience Training Project
10:05 – 10:15	Energiser break
10:15 – 11:10	LELAN – Lived Experience Governance Project
11:10 – 11:30	Morning Break
11:30 – 12:30	Workshop – Powerful stories – influencing change (inside out & associates)
12:30 - 1:15	Lunch
1:15 – 1:45	Reflections on a journey of recovery (Mary O’Hagan)
1:45 – 2:15	Peer Soap Box – 5x5 minutes
2:15 – 2:20	Self-care break
2:20 – 2:40	Promoting change and recovery through the arts (Heidi Everett)
3:50 – 3:55	A word from the Secretariat
3:45 – 4:00	Wrapping up, close of the workshop, & afternoon tea



LELAN – Training and Governance Projects

The National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum (NMHCCF) and Mental Health Lived Experience Engagement Network (MHLEEN) have commissioned the Lived Experience Leadership and Advocacy Network (LELAN) to develop two projects:

1. A Scoping Paper for Lived Experience Expertise Training Programs to provide a picture of the availability and quality of current lived experience training and support, and to provide recommendations for the future of training and support pathways for the lived experience workforce.
2. A Mental Health Lived Experience Governance Framework and Toolkit which will assist governments, service providers and organisations with their co-design and co-production activities.

Following an overview and update of the projects, attendees were asked to provide feedback on the themes and topics relevant to the projects and consider what the ideal pathway for success is.

Reflections

75% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied with LELAN's presentation.

“Ellie has done amazing work and it was absolutely nice to hear what she has done and hopes doing in the near future.”

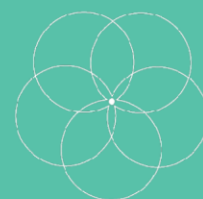
Powerful Stories – influencing change (inside out & associates)

Inside out & associates facilitated a powerful stories workshop, defining purposeful storytelling as a concept and unpacking purposeful storytelling as a process. Groups were asked:

1. As a group, identify the purpose/s of sharing powerful lived experience story/stories within the role that brought you here today,
2. As a group, identify key messages that align with the purpose/s of powerful storytelling you came up with earlier on.

Some of the common themes from all groups in response to question one were as follows:

- Informing and influencing change
- Support through connection, belonging and demonstration of strength and recovery
- Collective voice



Some of the common themes from all groups in response to question two were as follows:

- Powerful storytelling can help achieve reform & service transformation
- We are all individuals, but united we can do more
- The power and influence the individual can make to professionals
- What are we moving towards and how could that look differently

Reflections

88% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied with inside out's presentation.

"Best session of all. Would have really appreciated much longer."

Reflections on a journey of recovery (Mary O'Hagan)

Mary O'Hagan, recently commenced in the role of Executive Director, Lived Experience in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division, Department of Health Victoria. This position arose from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

Mary reflected on her various experiences and shared her learnings about affecting change through lived experience leadership, in particular the importance of diversity, respect and acceptance.

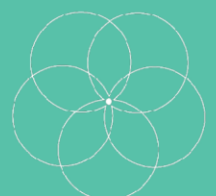
Mary stated that leadership is about seeing the need for change and then actually taking steps to make something happen and keeping momentum.

Reflections

81% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied with Mary O'Hagan's presentation.

"Mary indeed covered her area well and took questions from the floor & responded effectively with brilliant answers."

"Both inspiring and informative"



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 of interest to their peers. Presentations were:

1. Eileen McDonald - Consumer & Carer leadership and engagement in research
2. Evan Bichara – Giving webinar training packages to GPs via the College of GPs
3. Alba Chliakhtine – CALD Teenagers and Parents' Mental Health
4. Sachi Hirayama – Self healing

Reflections

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

"It was nice seeing different Perspectives working on a variety of work across the Land in which we live in."

Promoting change and recovery through the arts (Heidi Everett)

Heidi Everett is a producer, artist, writer, mental health arts advocate and social impact innovator. Heidi shared her music, her life experiences and many insightful observations of the paradoxes of what gets called "mental health care", and spoke to the many things she has done towards change and healing – for herself and with others who have lived/living experience.

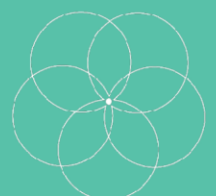
"Telling your story in a different way opens doors."

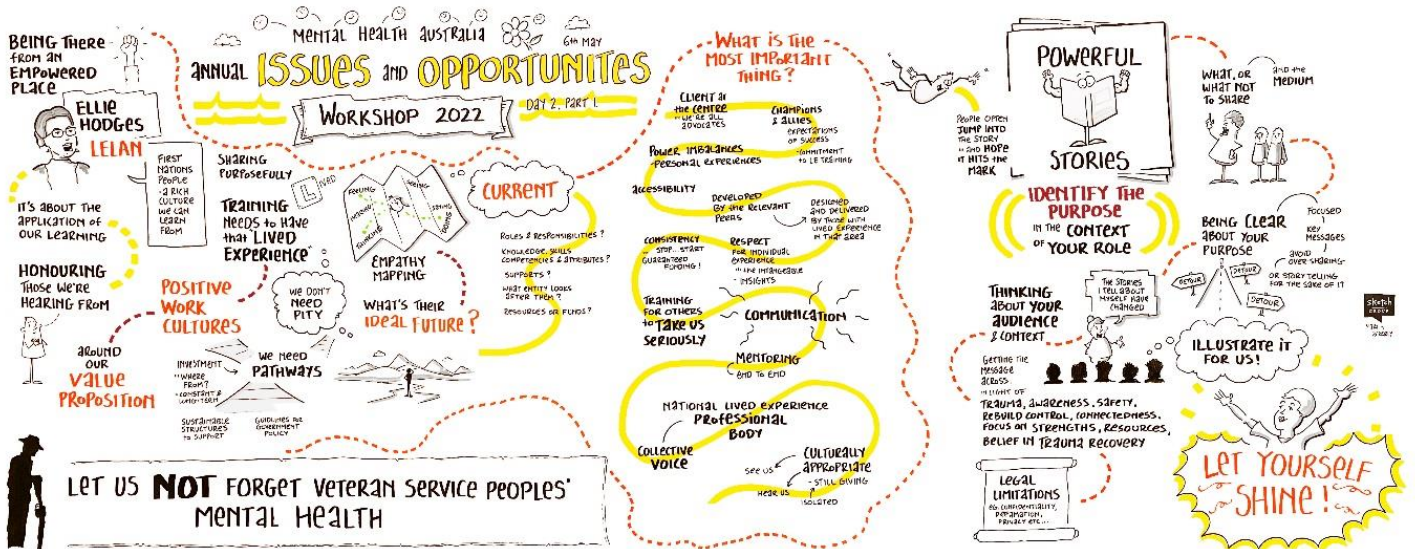
Reflections

60% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied with Heidi Everett's presentation.

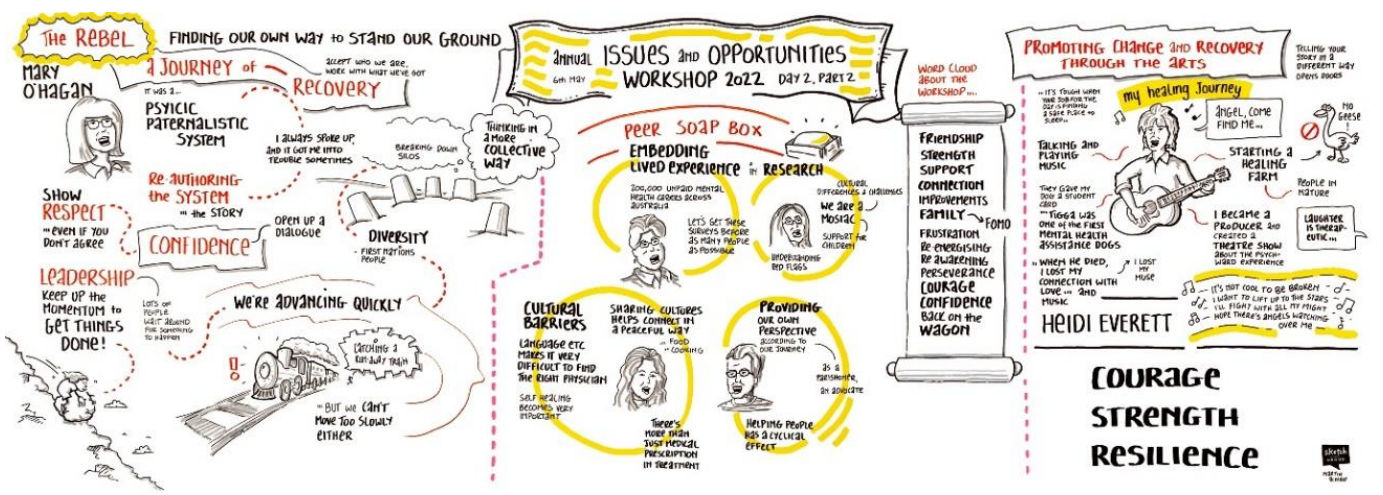
"loved her, a real relaxation at the end of intensive two days"

"She is totally amazing and very inspiring!"





LET US **NOT** FORGET VETERAN SERVICE PEOPLES' MENTAL HEALTH



Reflections

88% of workshop evaluation survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the workshop overall.

"Well organized well planned. Everyone had an opportunity to contribute in a safe, friendly, caring way. I think ALL involved learned something from this wonderful event."

"The workshop was well organised with great facilitation" "It was very informative and kept with the theme of the workshop."

"Meeting with like-minded colleagues is very important for me. After the workshop I felt very motivated and fresh."



More information

For more information please contact the Consumer and Carer Team at Mental Health Australia on 02 6285 3100 or at natreg@mhaustralia.org

