

19 August 2021

EMBARGO to Friday 20 August 2021

Roadmap to embed people with lived experience of mental illness in local services

Southern NSW Local Health District (SNSWLHD) will today launch a Mental Health Lived Experience (Peer) Work Framework to ensure people with experience of mental illness continue to shape and deliver the district's mental health services.

The framework was designed and developed by a joint working group that included SNSWLHD; Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District; COORDINARE - South Eastern NSW Primary Health Network; community-based organisations; and people with lived experience of mental illness who also work in mental health services.

SNSWLHD Mental Health Director, Damien Eggleton, said the framework will create the groundwork for the region to grow its expertise of people with lived experience of a mental illness, also known as Peer Workers.

"Peer Workers are a key element in our Southern NSW Mental Health service. The Framework will guide us as we develop and grow this important role in our workforce," Mr Eggleton said.

Mr Eggleton said that Peer Workers can also support clinical teams to understand the needs, including cultural needs, of consumers and patients.

"It was important for us that the Aboriginal community were also involved in the development of the Framework to guide us on the role of Aboriginal peer workers."

It is anticipated that the framework will serve as a template for a range of Lived Experience Workforces, such as suicide prevention, disability services, social housing, forensic mental health, justice and incarceration as they continue to develop across the health system.

Tim Heffernan, the Mental Health Peer Coordinator at COORDINARE, said that Peer Workers are the fastest expanding workforce in mental health.

"We need to create the structures to support this growth. A framework is like a scaffold - it will help us build our workforce with confidence, safety and vision," Mr Heffernan said.

The perspectives of Peer Workers were sought throughout the framework's development.

Beate Zanner is a Peer Worker for SNSWLHD and uses her own mental health journey to inform her work and support others through their recovery from mental ill health.

“Using the recovery skills of mutuality and reciprocity is empowering for the people I’m supporting and for me because we have a connection” Beate said.

“We understand that we both have had difficulties in life through our mental health. They feel heard and understood and that helps healing.”

The Mental Health Lived Experience (Peer) Work Framework can be found [here](#).

If you would like to join the webinar for the official launch, please register on this link <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2089684937242177804>

Date: Friday 20 August

Time: 11am to 11.30am

Special Guests speaking at the launch include the NSW Mental Health Commissioner, Catherine Lourey, Chief Executives from participating organisations and several Peer Workers.

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