



MEDIA RELEASE

Mental Health Council of Tasmania in partnership
with the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania



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Lived Experience Training and Development Hub a win for Tasmania's mental health sector

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) and the Alcohol Tobacco and other Drug Council of Tasmania (ATDC) have together welcomed the investment announced in today's State Budget for a Lived Experience Training and Development Hub (the Hub).

The Hub, which will be jointly funded by the State Government and Primary Health Tasmania, will provide training pathways for people with lived experience of mental health concerns and people with lived experience of alcohol and other drug use, empowering them to effectively apply their unique expertise to support others through their own treatment or recovery journeys.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said the funding was a welcome acknowledgement from the Government of the value that people with lived experience bring to the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors.

"We welcome the funding announced today for a Lived Experience Training and Development Hub in Tasmania. Lived experience is a unique and invaluable qualification that comes from a person having been through mental health challenges of their own, or having supported a loved one through those challenges. Having lived experience embedded in the system leads to better experiences and better outcomes for the people accessing services, as well as their friends and family."

"People with lived experience have a wealth of knowledge and insights that, due mostly to a lack of training and development opportunities in the state, have been largely overlooked. The Hub will be a place where people can learn how to best harness and apply their experience to help others who are going through many of the same things they have, and who are accessing many of the same supports and services that they have," said Ms Digolis.

Alison Lai, CEO of the ATDC, agreed that a bolstered Lived Experience Workforce will have wide ranging benefits for both sectors.

"We echo the Council's praise for the government's decision. There has been a significant increase in demand for the inclusion of lived experience in both the mental health and alcohol and other drug workforces, and the Hub will provide an excellent opportunity for our two health sectors to work together to support the many Tasmanians that are choosing to work in these roles," said Ms Lai.

MHCT has already developed and piloted a four-day course, which introduces people to the fundamentals of Lived Experience Work, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants.

In addition to upskilling Lived Experience Workers, the Hub will also provide training to help organisations improve their systems, supports and workplace culture to better understand, value and support Lived Experience roles.

MHCT will be seeking further information about other mental health investments outlined in today's budget over the coming weeks.

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Background:

Lived Experience Workers can occupy various roles across the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors. While the job titles and related tasks can vary widely, their role generally involves developing relationships, sharing personal experiences and knowledge, treatment, harm reduction strategies or recovery.

The role most often thought of in the mental health sector is a 'Peer Support Worker', who leverage their personal experience of mental ill-health, or of accessing the mental health system (or supporting someone to access it) to support and guide others through their own lived experience journey.

The terms 'Peer Workforce' and 'Lived Experience Workforce' have been used interchangeably for some time.

Earlier this year, MHCT held a focus group with over 40 representatives from across both the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors to help decide on a single preferred term, with participants overwhelmingly favouring 'Lived Experience' as the preferred term for this workforce. This aligns with recommendations from the National Mental Health Commission's Lived Experience Workforce Guidelines which were launched in 2020.

When referring to the workforce, 'Lived' and 'Experience' should be capitalised. When referring to the experience of an individual (ie someone's personal 'lived experience') lower case is preferred.

Note that individuals may prefer to refer to themselves having 'lived' or 'living' experience, or various other terms depending on which they best identify with.

Please include the following crisis support services for any story regarding mental health or suicide:

A Tasmania Lifeline: 1800 984 434 atasmanianlifeline.com.au/

Lifeline: 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 kidshelpline.com.au/

More information on safely reporting on mental illness or suicide can be found at:

<https://mindframe.org.au/> and <https://www.tascharter.org/>