Queensland Alliance for Mental Health

NTSSS NDIS Emerging Workforce Development Priorities
Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

Peer Work Student Mentoring Project
Final Report

January 2023

We would like to acknowledge this project was funded as part of WorkAbility Qld, a consortium of three organisations including Community Services Industry Alliance, National Disability Services and Queensland Council of Social Service under the NDIS Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS).

Who is QAMH?

Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) is a peak body representing the community mental health and wellbeing sector in Queensland.

As a peak body, QAMH advocates for and supports our member organisations to foster better outcomes for people experiencing mental health issues. We are committed to promoting the unique value the community mental health and wellbeing sector offers to the health care continuum within Queensland.

QAMH is proud to work with our members and key partners, to influence system reform and enhance the contribution that the community mental health and wellbeing sector plays in people's lives.

QAMH contact details

433 Logan Road
Stones Corner QLD 4120

For any further information please contact:

Jennifer Black
Chief Executive Officer
Email: jblack@qamh.org.au
Tel: (07) 3394 8480

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Disclaimer

Availability

The report is available online at www.qamh.org.au

Abbreviations

QAMH	**Queensland Alliance for Mental Health**
QLEWN	**Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network**
PPIMS	**Brisbane North Peer Participation in Mental Health Services Network**
CSIA	**Community Service Industry Alliance**
DESBT	**Department of Employment Small Business and Training**
DVA	**Department of Veterans Affairs**
NDIS	**National Disability Insurance Scheme**
NTSSS	**NDIS Training Skills Support Strategy**
PAC	**Project Advisory Committee**
TAFE QLD	**TAFE Queensland**
TQEC	**TAFE Queensland East Coast**
TQGC	**TAFE Queensland Gold Coast**
Cert IV MHPW	**Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work**
KPI	**Key Performance Indicator**
RTO	**Registered Training Organisation**
WHO	**World Health Organisation**

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

QAMH acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, learn and work and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past, present and emerging.

Recognition of Lived Experience and Background

We recognise all Queenslanders with personal Lived Experience (Consumer) of mental health challenges, alcohol and other drug issues and suicidal thoughts, feelings and/or actions and those who support them (Family/Carer/Kin). If it was not for you, we would not be doing this work. Your journeys through difficult and challenging times are not all for nothing, they are deeply meaningful to you, and absolutely make sense in the context of your life history. You are not alone.

As per the QLD Lived Experience Framework, we recognise the unique attributes that Lived Experience (Peer) Workers bring to their role. Their experiences of having a profound life-changing mental health, alcohol, and other drug and/or life challenges that have led to learning a new life direction and concept of self or life changing experiences while supporting someone with mental health challenges that have profoundly impacted their life/worldview, is an essential criterion of this work.

What makes Lived Experience work so effective is that we not only bring our lived/living experience but also, what we have learned through that experience and how to apply it. (These are real skills that take practice and as Peer Workers, form the basis of our vocation and practice). We also bring our expertise in understanding the wider consumer movement and concepts. We have connections with our peers and peer networks. We bring a social justice and fairness focus, informed again, by our own personal experiences. We are resilient in the face of discrimination, prejudicial and disempowering attitudes, practices, and policies. We focus on the relationship and inspire optimism and hope. This expertise is acquired over time and requires the holders of this knowledge, Lived Experience Educators, Lived Experience Academics and Researchers, Lived Experience Leaders, Mentors and Supervisors to pass it on to and in support of our new and emerging Lived Experience (Peer) workforce for both personal and professional growth.

We recognise the importance of education, training and professional development and Lived Experience Supervision/Co-Reflection in best practice for our profession, therefore this report matters to the future of our Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce and has the potential to bring about improvements and change.

Finally, we recognise and thank all people of Lived Experience who have trusted our team and courageously and authentically shared their experiences so we can all learn and move forward.

Contemporary Language

Language around the Lived Experience (Peer) workforces varies between sectors and is dynamic within them. For example, in First Nations communities the term “mentor” would be more commonly used to describe the peer worker role. It is recognised that language evolves and will continue to change as Lived Experience workforces develop.

This report uses contemporary Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce language. The term Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce has been adopted from national research which informed the development of the 2021 National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines. Rather than being understood as limited to a direct consumer support role, the contemporary language shifts the focus to reflect the range of roles within the workforces.

Executive Summary

The Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Project (the Project) supported TAFE students studying a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work with independent Lived Experience Peer Mentors. This was a pilot Project that ran on the East Coast and Gold Coast TAFE campuses from March to December 2022, under the stewardship of the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health, the Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network and TAFE Queensland. The project was funded by the Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, through the National Disability Insurance Scheme Training and Skills Support Strategy an initiative of Workability Queensland.

Mental Health Peer Work is a relatively new but growing element of the mental health workforce. Peer workers use their Lived Experience of mental health challenges to assist in the recovery and support of people currently experiencing mental health challenges. The Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work is one way for people to gain the qualifications to embark on this work. This Project was borne of concerns by the Project partners that students had felt unsupported and overwhelmed, that cost was a barrier, that opportunities for the necessary work placements were limited, and that student retention was poor.

The Project was established with clear objectives: to provide individualised and group support to students, to develop processes and resources for any future mentoring provision, to create local partnerships with a view to improving placement opportunities and to identify emerging issues affecting students. A Project Advisory Committee provided regular guidance and advice throughout the pilot.

Thirty students chose to participate in the Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Project. Two thirds of the participants were over 40 years old and nearly as many identified as female. A total of 101 individual sessions and 30 group sessions were delivered, identifying several common areas of concern among students. These included: managing time, stress, and self-care; the role of a peer worker; work opportunities post qualification; and understanding TAFE Qld processes.

Using both quantitative and qualitative data, collected through surveys, interviews, and Mentors' notes, the Project has been found to have had an overwhelmingly positive effect on student's wellbeing and confidence they would complete their studies. On the latter point, 90 per cent of participants either strongly agreed (45%) or agreed (45%) the Project increased their confidence, while the remaining students were neutral.

Throughout the Project, many of the initial concerns held by Project partners were found to be valid. These include:

- Insufficient information being provided to potential students during the enrolment process about the demands of the course and a lack of student readiness screening.
- Inconsistent opportunities to build industry relationships which would facilitate more placement opportunities.
- Some outdated course content and student learning materials.
- Inconsistent delivery of course material across campuses.
- A lack of distinction between studying as a Consumer Peer Worker and studying as a Carer Peer Worker

It must be noted that TAFE Queensland has responded very positively to these concerns and in some cases has worked with the project partners to rectify the situation.

Recommendations

To better support the development of a Peer Workforce, the Project Team and partners have made several recommendations which will require the support of Government, TAFE and other RTOs, potential employers and students. If followed, we believe these recommendations will do much to rectify the current systemic disadvantage faced by students in the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work.

1. Peer mentoring

a) Peer Mentoring Programs should be recurrently funded and available for all students studying the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

b) Peer Mentoring Programs should include support from Lived Experienced Mentors, providing both online and face-to-face opportunities to students. Mentors should be independently employed, but co-located with the RTO, and supported by teachers and training organisation staff.

2. Lived Experience Teachers, Trainers, and Assessors

a) A capacity building initiative should be implemented to increase the availability of qualified Lived Experience Educators, Trainers, and Assessors across Queensland.
b) Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) should ensure that the Cert IV in Peer Work qualification is delivered only by Lived Experience educators with Peer Work industry experience.
c) RTOs should encourage teachers to invite into the classroom people practicing from a range of specialist perspectives, including drug and alcohol addiction, First Nations, Multicultural perspectives, Hearing Voices, LGBTIQA+, Blood Born Virus, Perinatal, Eating disorders, Carer/Family/Kin, Consumer etc.
d) RTOs must ensure that Lived Experience supervision/co-reflection is provided to all their Designated Lived Experience Educators

3. Course Enrolment and Intake Processes

a) RTOs should ensure that during the enrolment process students are aware that a criminal history check will be necessary to complete the course placement requirement and for future employment in the workforce. This should not exclude a student from enrolling but can be a point of discussion when reviewing course readiness.

b) The intake process must ensure that students have a clear understanding of the course content, commitments required to complete the course and possible career pathways.

c) RTOs offer Consumer Peer Work and Carer Peer Work as identifiably separate streams and ensure students understand which stream they identify with from their own lived experience and which they intend to practice from as peer workers.

4. Vocational Student Placements

a) RTOs require students complete their placement at organisations that employ peer workers and are supervised by a person in a designated Lived Experience role

b) That placement organisations must clearly communicate student requirements upfront e.g., vaccinations for Vocational Student placements, criminal history screening.

c) TAFE Queensland continues to meet regularly with local service providers to enable ongoing quality placement opportunities that will support the students transition to the workforce.

d) TAFE Queensland ensures Student Placement Deed of Agreements are current and in place for the placement component of course and that students are fully informed of these placement opportunities at the beginning of the course.

5. Peer Workforce Industry

a) Organisations employing Peer Workers should complete “readiness” activities, including cultural awareness work required to ensure a safe working environment for all Lived Experience (Peer) Workers.

b) Organisations employing Peer Workers should provide ongoing supervision to ensure a safe working environment.

c) Organisations employing Peer Workers should commit to supporting the development of the Lived Experience workforce through providing students with quality placement opportunities.

Background

Peer workers are an emerging entity in the mental health workforce. They represent a paradigm shift from pathologising mental illness through the biomedical model of care to a trauma-based, recovery-oriented way of empowering people to realise their full potential. Their core values and skills stem from their lived/living experience of mental health challenges or supporting someone with those issues.

Several recent reports have highlighted the enormous challenges facing the mental health system. The final report from the Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry (Nov 2020), the House of Representatives Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Report (Oct 2021), the Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Guidelines (Dec 2021) and the Queensland Parliament's Mental Health Select Committee report (June 2022) all recognise that peer workers are an increasingly important part of the mental health workforce, and one which needs greater recognition and support.

In 2021, QLEWN, Brisbane North Peer Participation in Mental Health Services Network, and the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health conducted a state-wide survey to explore the supply, demand and, most importantly, the *quality* of available training in Queensland for the emerging peer workforce.

Peer Workforce Survey Summary Report - Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (qamh.org.au)

The survey showed that many respondents who had already undertaken the CHC43515 Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work qualification felt unsupported and were overwhelmed by the course content and assessment requirements. For those yet to undertake a Certificate IV, cost was a significant barrier. The widespread difficulty in finding meaningful placement opportunities for this course was also highlighted in survey responses. Consequently, the Peer Work Student Mentoring Program (the Project) was developed in response to the project partners concerns about the supply, demand, quality, and barriers to completing training for the Peer Workforce in Queensland.

Project Partners

The Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program is a collaboration between Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH), Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN), TAFE Queensland (TAFE QLD) and WorkAbility Queensland, through Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA).

The project was funded by the Department Employment Small Business and Training (DESBT) under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS), an initiative delivered on behalf of WorkAbility Queensland.

Purpose

The Project aimed to increase student retention and qualification completion rates, by developing and trialing support arrangements for an existing cohort of students enrolled in CHC43515 Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work (referred to as the Certificate IV in Peer Work).

The project intended to

- Provide individualised support through mentoring and group reflective practice
- Develop specific mentoring processes and resources, to provide a framework and resources for the future provision of effective student mentoring support
- Create partnerships locally for the completion of placement opportunities to support and ensure future sustainability of this project
- Identify emerging issues impacting students

Project Governance

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) comprising of representatives from each of the Project Partners was established and met twelve times throughout the project.

The PAC provided guidance, recommendations, advice, and networking suggestions (including commenting on draft documentation and reports if required) to ensure that the Project achieved its objectives. Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1) and a Project Plan (see Appendix 2) were endorsed by PAC members.

Project Deliverables

The Services Agreement with the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training identified the below services to be provided in the delivery of the Project.

A. Recruit a Peer Project Lead and two Peer Mentors to provide support to 25-30 Participants already enrolled in CHC43515 Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work across two TAFE Queensland locations (Gold Coast and East Coast campuses).

B. Develop and trial support arrangements including individualised support needs and mentoring support, group reflective practice and identify emerging issues impacting on Participants.

C. Ensure 30 Peer Practice Supervision sessions (providing support and supervision to Peer Mentors) are provided by QLEWN.

D. Develop specific mentoring support processes and resources for Queensland delivery, alongside a focus on creating partnerships locally for the completion of placement opportunities to support and ensure future sustainability of this project upon completion of this Services Agreement; and

E. Convene a Project Advisory Committee comprising membership from the Supplier, QLEWN, TAFE Queensland and WorkAbility Qld to guide this Project.

The Project Plan endorsed by PAC members identified the below as additional project deliverables:

- A report which provides a comprehensive outline of the work completed, including key issues and challenges, opportunities and potential solutions, project findings and recommendations.
- An action plan for the mental health peer workforce sector to guide potential work, partnerships, alliances and solutions to issues identified in the report.

Project Delivery and Evaluation

A Lived Experience Project Coordinator and two Lived Experience Peer Mentors were employed to implement the Project. The Peer Project Coordinator, working in collaboration with the Project Advisory Committee, was responsible for leading the project. This included writing and designing project methodology, convening advisory committees, consulting with stakeholders, supervising the Peer Mentors, and providing reports. The Peer Mentors worked closely with the TAFE QLD teachers who were delivering the course at the Mooloolaba campus on the Sunshine Coast, and at the Southport Campus on the Gold Coast.

Specifically, the Project Team:

- Worked with students to identify their individualised support needs, including support to navigate placement requirements
- Provided individual mentoring
- Facilitated group reflective practice
- Supported the identification of appropriate services for placement opportunities
- Identified emerging issues impacting on students
- Developed processes, pathways, partnerships, and resources to support the sustainability of the project

The Project was evaluated through examining quantitative and qualitive data collected from student and group interactions with the LE Peer Mentors.

Data included:

- Surveys for participating students and partners
- Student interviews (Student Stories)
- Mentoring summary notes
- Student Enrolment data at each site

Student Stories

All students who participated in the Peer Mentoring Project were invited to participate in the evaluation process, by sharing part of their personal Lived Experience and their experience in participating in the Peer Mentoring Project. Four students participated in a 60-minute Peer conversation with the Peer Project Coordinator. The interview was recorded and documented in an interview summary, which was sent back to students for their approval before being included in this report. Students were given the option to use their real name or a pseudonym. Each student was remunerated for their time.

Project Delivery

Staff Recruitment and Supervision

Positions were advertised through SEEK and promoted by partner organisations. The Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator (0.6 FTE) commenced on the 28th of March 2022. Lived Experience Peer Mentors (2 x 0.4 FTE) commenced on the 1st of June 2022 (after initial appointees discontinued in the roles due to personal reasons). QAMH and TAFE QLD Induction and Orientation processes were completed. (See Appendix 3 & Appendix 4 for Position Descriptions)

Best practice in Lived Experience Supervision gives individual Peer Workers the right to choose their own practice supervision provider. Throughout the project Brook RED provided ten Individual Lived Experience supervision sessions and three Group Lived Experience sessions for Project Staff. Seven other sessions were provided by another external contractor who was the preferred provider nominated by one Peer Mentor.

Student Participation

Processes were established by the project team, to ensure the enrolment process into the Peer Mentoring program was simple (via email and hardcopy) and confidential, with appropriate handling of personal information. The process also aimed to give students choice and autonomy. Enrolment was optional and not all students chose to enroll. Students had to engage via email, telephone or face-to-face to complete the enrolment form. In addition to the enrolment form, an information and consent form was required to be read and signed before a student could begin the Peer Mentoring program. The Information and Consent form provided students with information about the Peer Mentoring Project, what voluntary participation in the project involved, and explained privacy provisions in relation to collection and storage of their personal information.

Project participants identified their preference for initial contact with the Peer Mentor, by phone/text or email and for the peer mentor to schedule individual appointments with them. Participants would also frequently request a session with a Peer Mentor on an ad hoc basis when they saw them on the campus, or by email. The need for Peer Mentors to be flexible, responsive, and available was essential.

Participant Recruitment

Mentors relied on the support of teachers to circulate the Peer Mentoring Project Flyer to students and facilitate opportunities for Peer Mentors to introduce themselves and the Project to students during class time. See Participant Feedback - Promotion.
This was effective at the Mooloolaba campus, as students attend class in person two days a week and the teacher welcomed the Peer Mentor into the classroom. Consequently, there were seven enrolments into the Project in the first week. However, at the Gold Coast campus the course is

primarily taught online, with optional attendance at in-person tutorial groups. The first enrolments on the Gold Coast were completed when the Peer Mentor met students face-to-face in the tutorial group sessions. Due to these differences, participant recruitment into the Project at the Gold Coast Campus was more difficult.

As Peer Mentoring was a new concept in a TAFE QLD setting, the Project found developing and circulating a document entitled *What is Peer Mentoring* to clarify the scope of the role was helpful and aided conversations with students, teachers, and TAFE QLD staff. Table 1 is an extract from the document that was often referred to in conversation.

Peer Mentor IS	Peer Mentor is NOT
A person who has successfully completed the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work	A TAFE teacher
An experienced Peer Worker who has worked in various settings.	An Employee of TAFE
A person with Lived and/or Living Experience of Mental Health and or AOD Recovery as a consumer or carer.	A TAFE Counsellor
A person who can offer Peer Support	A member of TAFE Student Support Services
A person employed by an outside organisation that advocates for the Mental Health AOD Lived Experience Workforce in QLD	A TAFE tutor
A person you can confidentially talk to about your study in the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work, your professional goals, barriers, and successes.	A friend, buddy, mate
A person who is well networked and resourced in the Peer Workforce	A part of your Mental Health Support Team

Table 1: What is Peer Mentoring

Recordkeeping requirements and Peer practice values

When co-designing the enrolment form and collecting students' personal information, the project team were deliberate in only collecting what was needed and keeping this to a minimum to respect students' privacy.

Peer Mentors were required to use a custom designed template to write progress notes for each individual session and group mentoring session to ensure that any developments were recorded accurately and without delay. These progress notes were stored online in a secure QAMH file. The progress notes were used for a thematic analysis at the end of the project, including calculating time spent with students and preferred location of mentoring.

The following information was required to be on all progress notes:

- Mentoring start and end time
- Mentoring session date
- Peer Mentor's name
- Name of student
- Setting or location where the mentoring was provided e.g., TAFE campus, coffee shop, online, phone
- Plan for next steps, including date/time of next session
- Notes of the mentoring provided including themes

Peer Mentors were encouraged to demonstrate respect for student privacy by taking a collaborative approach to note-taking. As such, mentors were encouraged to ask participants at the end of a mentoring session "what should we write in the progress notes about this session today?" Often mentoring occurred informally via email or in a campus corridor when a student came across a Mentor to ask a question. Collaborative notetaking and openness to unscheduled Peer conversations outside formal mentoring sessions, aligns with Peer Workers values and practices, by implementing a person-driven approach in an interactive process.

The student cohort

TAFE QLD has a January and July intake of students. Therefore, when the Peer Mentors began in early June 2022, they discovered that the student cohort included students at various points of the course. There were several students who were just completing their studies that had enrolled in the course in July 2021, a second group of students who had begun in January 2022, and a third group of students who had enrolled in July 2022. It was agreed any student from any of these intakes was eligible to enroll in the Peer Mentoring Program. One student was accepted into the Project at the Gold Coast campus who had begun study in 2020 and was still working to complete it. A student who had been studying at the Maryborough Campus since July 2021 was also included in the Project, because teachers based at Mooloolaba were teaching this student due to staff shortages in Maryborough.

It is worth noting that TAFE QLD is flexible in making every attempt to support and encourage students to keep at their studies. Three students from Mooloolaba and four students from the Gold Coast, who enrolled in the Peer Mentoring Program, were re-enrolling in 2022 to complete the course they had commenced earlier. Some students had formal progress plans with TAFE QLD, which approved an extended timeframe to complete the course. For example, one student had arranged to only complete one unit at a time, with a completion date of October 2023. Others have had a break and have re-enrolled to complete their remaining units.

Participant Demographics

No students in the Project identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ancestry. 73 per cent of students identified as female. Two thirds of Project participants were over 40 years of age (see table 2). The dominance of an older age group completing this qualification is significant, as many students are re-entering formal education after a long period. Consequently, the opportunity for mentoring support can be especially important. See Sandy's Story

CAMPUS	18-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70
Mooloolaba	2	2	2	6	4	1
Gold Coast	1	1	2	3	6	0
Total	**3**	**3**	**4**	**9**	**10**	**1**

Table 2: Age groups of Project participants

Table 3 indicates avenues of support for their studies which were currently being accessed by Project participants when they enrolled with the mentor.

Mooloolaba students current support responses	Gold Coast students current support responses
Nil	Nil
NDIS support worker	Classmates
Classroom support	Disability Support Officer
Tutoring at Community Focus	TAFE counsellor
Teacher	Emails from teacher
A friend with a psychology and counselling degree	St Johns Crisis Centre
Department Veterans Affairs (DVA) Rehab OT	Department of Veterans Affairs
	Tutorial Support at TAFE
	Peer Support
	Progression Plan

Table 3: Supports being received by students on enrolment to the Peer Mentoring Project

63 per cent of Project participants indicated they would specialise in the Consumer Stream, 30 per cent in the Carer Stream and nearly 7 per cent as both. It is noted that five out of the 17 students enrolled in the Carer Stream were at the Mooloolaba campus this year compared to 1 student at the Gold Coast. See also Quality Improvement - Separation of Consumer and Carer Streams

Provision of Peer Mentoring

Working Together Co-reflection is about creating expertise together through a process of learning, practicing and reflection. Co-reflection is designed to model a peer support relationship so that we are practicing the same principles at all levels of our relationships. (Shery Mead, Intentional Peer Support) *What is IPS? | Intentional Peer Support*

Training alone will not ensure a Peer worker gets what they need to grow and sustain the currency in their practice. This project aimed to provide students with the opportunity to access this important aspect of Peer Work via a Peer Mentor.

Peer Mentoring is relational work; therefore, it was important that the Peer Mentors connected with the student as a person, which includes the many different dimensions that are often interconnected with all we do. Consequently, at times it took considerable skill for the Peer Mentors to keep the conversations to the topic of the participant's education and study.

Setting

Peer Mentors were given a designated workspace on campus by TAFE QLD for the two days a week they worked, on Wednesday and Thursday. This provided a private place to meet students for individual or group sessions, and a place for them to work and be found by students if required.

Initially, at the Mooloolaba Campus an office space was provided, then a classroom or group room was made available. However, the on-campus café was a favoured venue for some participants who preferred a public place over an office environment. The Peer Mentor was also invited into the classroom regularly to join in with relevant group conversations. At the Gold Coast campus, a counselling room on the fourth floor was available for the Peer Mentor. Despite being large and comfortable, this room was in a quiet, secluded part of the campus. The location was often difficult for students to find, and the Peer Mentor felt quite isolated.

Sandy's story

Sandy is a 56-year-old woman. She is a full time Carer for her husband who has been going through chronic illness for the past 10 years and experiences depressions. Sandy enrolled to complete the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work in July 2022 and at first was hesitant because it had been 30 years since she had studied in an academic environment. She would like peer mentoring to continue and feels it should be part of the curriculum for all students, as it would be advantageous to students when they go out into the real field. Sandy commented that it was wonderful to get the tools from the class, then hear from the Peer Mentors how these tools are applied in the real-world work, and how challenges are navigated in practice.

The other support Sandy received from the Peer Mentor was around using technology; understanding how adult learning happens today; and how to prioritise and go about studying with a modern mindset. She identified the Peer Mentor taught her how to break the assignment tasks up in smaller pieces that were more manageable and achievable with all her other Carer duties. She expressed that the balance was "just right" with a teacher and mentor because they gave her different gifts. She felt she could go to the Peer Mentor and ask any questions and they would take the time to help her understand what she needed to know. Sandy felt the course was developing her as a person; helping her to be a better Carer; and opening her mind to many different perspectives.

Sandy attended both individual and group peer mentoring sessions. She identified the individual sessions were like "customised solution support", and the co-reflection group sessions were like "brainstorming session" where you could hear other people's issues and perspectives. The underlying theme Sandy has gone to the Peer Mentor for is to explore "how does this translate into real life scenarios?" She knows she can ask the teacher too. Sometimes the teacher can be very busy, and the Peer Mentor is more accessible. Sandy likes the combination of face-to-face and online classes. Classroom environment encourages "real interactions with peers and the teachers and great practice for peer work". The recorded classes are great because she can watch them in her own time and work around her caring responsibilities. When she completes her study, she hopes she can get work as a Carer Peer Worker.

Individual Peer Mentoring

Individual sessions were held face-to-face on campus, online or by telephone. Communication in-between sessions also occurred via these methods. The average duration of an individual session was 45 minutes. Although there was no limit to how many individual sessions a student could have with a Peer Mentor, the highest number of individual sessions recorded for a single participant was eleven. While the target number of individual mentoring sessions for the project was 30, the mentors provided more than 100, which vividly demonstrates the level of need expressed by students.

Group Mentoring

"The individual sessions were like "customised solution support", but the co-reflection group sessions were like "brainstorming sessions" where you hear other people's issues and perspectives." Project Participant.

"Having two peer mentors facilitate the group co-reflection was really helpful as they bought two similar but different perspectives to the group which helped me realise there are many ways to do Peer Work" Project Participant

Group mentoring sessions were held online every fortnight and offered to all students from both campuses. Group Mentoring Sessions commenced on the 21July and were co-facilitated by both Peer Mentors. Group sessions were promoted via a flier and Teams calendar invites emailed out to all students. 30 Group Mentoring Sessions with an average of 5 participants at each session were delivered, exceeding the target of 20 Group Mentoring Sessions.

It was difficult to find a time and day when the Peer mentors were working and the students were available to attend. Thursday's at 1pm was the agreed time, which seemed to work better for Gold Coast students, who were the main regular attendees. It was thought another reason why this was popular with Gold Coast students was that the chosen online medium was one they were more familiar with in their current learning environment.

To reach our target for group mentoring sessions and ensure students could access a group mentoring session, the peer mentors also found opportunities to have group discussions with students. In Mooloolaba, a regular Study Group session was organised and facilitated by the Peer Mentor, with regular attendees.

Scheduling challenges

Accessibility and flexibility of the peer mentors was important to both students and teaching staff. Peer Mentors had several cancellations and rescheduled appointments for individual mentoring sessions. Life was busy for students, and the Peer Mentors' capacity to be flexible was important and valued by them.

The mentors quickly learnt that term break was not a good time for Peer mentoring, because TAFE campuses close, and staff and students take a well-deserved break. This was true for both individual and group Peer Mentoring sessions. So, during term break the peer mentors focused on building local connections with industry, to increase opportunities for vocational student placements.

Quantitative Outcomes

The table below summarises student participation in the individual and group sessions offered by the mentors over the course of the project.

Total Number of Participants	Project Participation	Number of Participants Enrolled	Number of Participants who achieved an Outcome through this Project
30	People already enrolled in Cert IV Peer Work – Gold Coast Campus	2	Withdrew
		11	Completed some of the Project/Qualification
		0	Completed all the Project/Qualification
	People already enrolled in Cert IV Peer Work – Mooloolaba Campus	1	Withdrew
		8	Completed some of the Project/Qualification
		8	Completed all the Project/Qualification
Total Number of Sessions Provided	**Session Type and Location**	**Number of Participants who attended by identified Number of Sessions**	
101	**Individual** Peer Mentoring Sessions– **Gold Coast** Campus	3	Less than 2 Sessions
		4	Between 2 and 5 Sessions
		5	Between 6 and 10 Sessions
		1	11 or more Sessions
	Individual Peer Mentoring Sessions– **Mooloolaba** Campus	3	Less than 2 Sessions
		10	Between 2 and 5 Sessions
		3	Between 6 and 10 Sessions
		0	11 or more Sessions
30	**Group** Based Mentoring Sessions– **Gold Coast** Campus	6	Less than 2 Sessions
		3	Between 2 and 5 Sessions
		1	Between 6 and 10 Sessions
		0	11 or more Sessions
	Group Based Mentoring Sessions– **Mooloolaba** Campus	1	Less than 2 Sessions
		13	Between 2 and 5 Sessions
		1	Between 6 and 10 Sessions
		0	11 or more Sessions

Table 4: Quantitative outcomes

Project impact on overall student cohort retention and completion

The preferred method to evaluate the impact of the Project was to compare 2021 student cohort enrolment and completion figures (prior to the mentoring project commencing) against the 2022 overall cohort enrollment and completion figures. However, this data wasn't available. Student

cohort data identifying numbers of students enrolled and withdrawn/deferred in 2022 was provided by TAFE Qld , but did not identify continuing students and was inconsistent with the observations of the Project Team members. Therefore, it is not presented in this report.

Mentoring session themes

Topics discussed during mentoring sessions were analysed and are represented in the table and figures below.

Support Themes		***Individual Sessions***		***Group Sessions***	
Key Theme	**Sub-Themes**	**Mooloolaba**	**Gold Coast**	**Mooloolaba**	**Gold Coast**
		No. Peer Conversations		**No. Peer Conversations**	
Systemic disadvantage	Time Management / Balance	24	27	3	3
	Self-care / Managing Stress	17	24	3	3
	Being "Stuck"	2	10	0	0
	Imposter Syndrome	0	9	2	0
	Validation of progress	8	0	0	0
Post qualification opportunities	Creating / connecting to networks	1	18	2	11
	Work after TAFE	7	22	0	10
Role of a Peer Worker	Role of a Peer	9	17	16	20
	Peer Values	2	22	8	16
	Co-Reflection Sessions	6	19	9	9
	Boundaries	1	14	8	17
	Carer & Consumer Streams	0	5	2	7
	Hearing Voices	0	2	2	3
TAFE QLD processes and course delivery	Placement support	19	14	11	4
	Assessment support / clarity	22	16	0	4
	Communication with TAFE	0	22	0	4
	Course content language	7	6	4	4
	Study Group	10	0	2	0
	Role Plays	3	1	7	0

Table 54: Peer Mentoring Support Themes

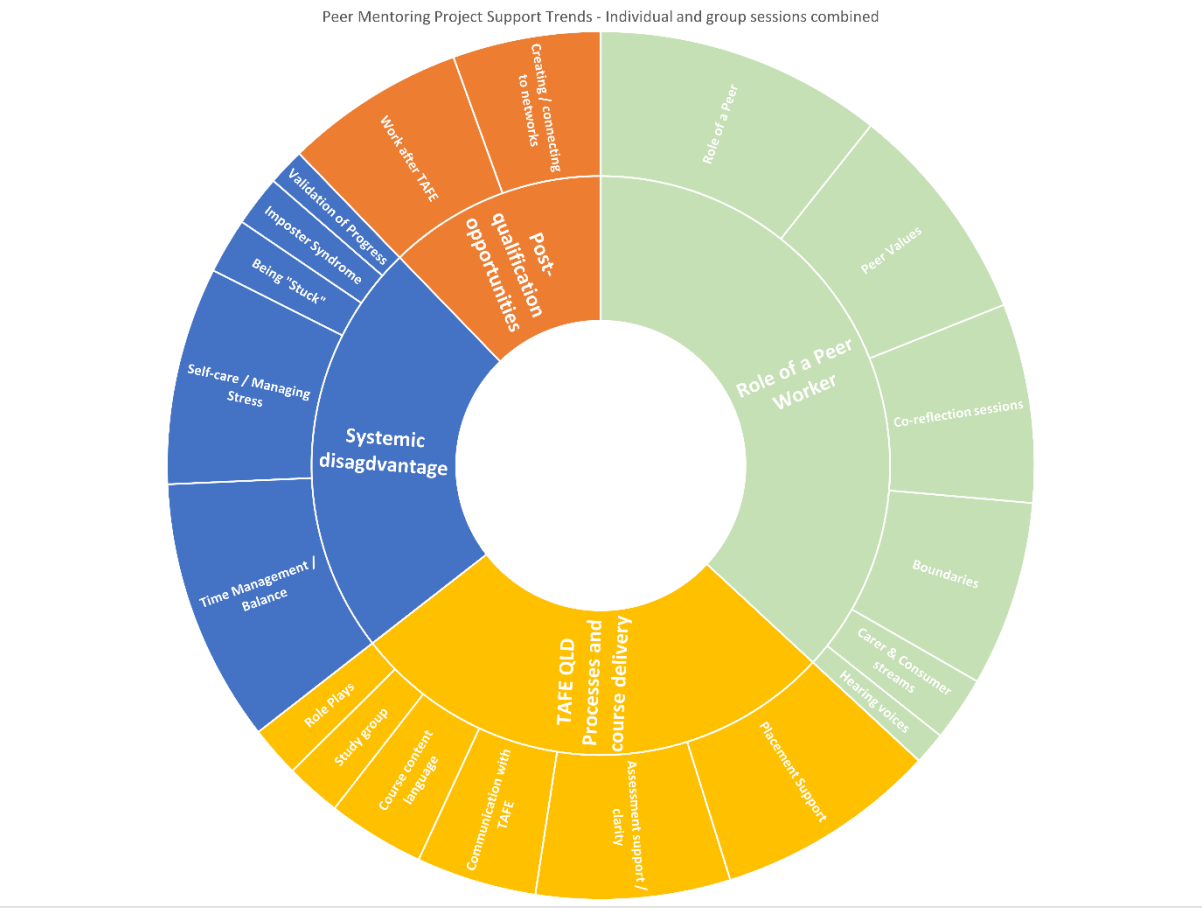


Figure 1: Peer Mentoring Support Themes (Individual and group sessions combined)

Key Theme Analysis

Role of a Peer Worker

The role of a Peer Worker can vary depending on the work environment. Transferring theory into practice can be challenging for new workers, especially when working in clinical settings.

Differences between Consumer and Carer Peer work and study streams was often a topic explored in mentoring conversations. The National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Guidelines State:

Many people have experiences of both direct or first-hand service use/diagnosis/challenges, and experiences supporting others. Most people gravitate to the job type that reflects whatever experiences were most life-changing for them, i.e., made the most significant impact on their lives and sense of self. For some, this may change over the course of their lives, and some people are employed at different times in either personal lived experience or family/Carer roles.

Roles that combine both personal Lived Experience and Family/Carer perspectives

Working in a role utilising both perspectives is likely to cause confusion, issues with boundaries, and conflicts of interest. Combined roles are not recommended and should not be considered without intensive exploration and consultation with the Lived Experience workforce and agreement reached by both personal (consumer) and family/Carer leaders and workforces.

Project participants commented:

> *"The course is very focused on the Consumer, and as a Carer I often felt unheard."*
>
> *"Having conversations with the Peer Mentors in the co reflection sessions, I suddenly realised why it was so important to know the difference and that I needed to choose which perspective I wanted to work from."*

The importance of Co-reflection as an essential component of ongoing professional development for Peer workers (especially during initial entry into the workforce) was not understood or seen as a necessity. This was discussed and explored in Peer Mentoring sessions and students began to recognise its importance.

Providing Peer Support for someone who Hears Voices is an important issue in the role of a peer worker and was explored together. It is seen as an area of specialty and using the Hearing Voices Approach has an alignment with Peer Work and can take away any fear and stigma associated with the experience by normalising and validating a person's experiences.

Peer Values and principles in practice is a crucial underpinning element of education for entry level Peer Workers as Peer Support is a value driven practice This topic was discussed in detail exploring how personal and professional values are reflected in practice.

Navigating personal and professional boundaries was a frequent topic of Peer conversations. Interpersonal skills and relationships are often tricky for Peers to navigate due to the nature of the role Peers are required to use personal narrative in a professional context These are skills that need to be learnt from skilled supervisors/ mentors in a safe environment and are typically a new skill that entry level workers need to acquire.

Project participants commented:

> *"I have never been good with boundaries; I find it hard to say no."*
>
> *"The Peer Mentor was always very clear about what he could do and what he couldn't, I admired that."*

Appropriate and contemporary language

The course content did not consistently reflect contemporary language and often did not align with Lived Experience preferred terminology. References in role plays and assessments referred to support workers and counsellors? instead of Peer Support Workers.

It is commonly recognised that language evolves and will continue to change as the workforce develops. For example, the term Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce has been commonly adopted across the workforce as a response to issues identified in national consultations that informed the development of the 2021 *National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines*. As with other changes in preferred terminology, this recent change reflects how the workforce has grown. Rather than being limited to a direct consumer Peer Support role, contemporary language shifts the focus to reflect the range of roles within the workforce.

Use of language that is not contemporary has the potential to disadvantage graduates when they join the workforce. The students' experiences around the issues of language in the course and

course content was confusing and at times distressing. This is not just a matter of semantics as Peer Worker and Support Work, or Counselling reflect different practice frameworks and approaches.

> *"We were asked to do a role play and play the part of a counsellor; peer workers are not counsellors. Why couldn't they change the word in the role play to "Peer Support Worker".* Project participant.

Assessment support and clarity was sought by students accessing Peer Mentoring 42 times. This was an area where Peer Mentors would predominantly direct the students back to their teacher. However, peer conversations were useful when trying to better understand the assessment.

> *"Sometimes the assessment questions are not clear in that they are asking for several answers in one question. The peer mentor has helped me break the questions up and make sure I answer all the parts."* Project participant.

A *study group* was initiated at the Mooloolaba campus by the Peer Mentor to create an opportunity for students to have classroom space to work on their assessments with the Peer Mentor available to answer questions. At the Gold Coast Campus, a classroom is available for two half days a week and called a tutorial where a teacher is present. The tutorial includes an opportunity to complete role plays and assessments and students can work on other assessments with a teacher available to answer questions. This shows there are diverse ways to establish an effective study group.

> *"The Peer Mentor created a safe space for us to just chill out on campus and get our work done, while he worked away in the background. Just knowing he was there if I needed to ask a question was just what I needed to get the work done"* Project participant.

Role plays often caused a lot of extra stress and worry for students and talking about these with a peer mentor prior could help.

> *"I rang my Peer Mentor because the role play, I had to do required me to discuss the NDIS, but I didn't know what the NDIS was or how I could help someone to do it. My Peer Mentor said, 'well, just say that in the role play'. I didn't know I could say that I thought I had to know all about it"* Project participant.

Placement Support was needed more by some students than others. Having to secure your own placement is difficult, particularly when you are not familiar with the industry. The Peer Mentors were able to use their industry knowledge to help students find placements.

> *"The teacher has a connection with the local hospital, but if you don't want to go work in a hospital, why would you do your placement there? The Peer Mentor helped me get my placement in an organisation near my home and I helped with the art group, now I've finished my placement I volunteer there, and maybe one day will get a paid job."*
>
> *"I have never worked as a Peer worker and didn't know where to start looking for a placement. The Peer Mentor gave me some good ideas and names of places to try."*
>
> *"If you want do placement where the teacher works its easy, you get lots of support, but if you want to go somewhere else, you are on your own."*

Communication with TAFE was often challenging for some students. It could take weeks to receive a reply to an email and sometimes there was no reply at all. It could also be difficult to find time to ask teachers specific questions as they were clearly extremely busy in their roles. This was found to be a far greater issue at the Gold Coast Campus than it was at the Mooloolaba Campus.

> *"The teacher asked us to make an appointment if we wanted a chat, but that could take weeks, and by that time I've moved on and don't need to ask anymore."* Project Participant.

Advantage of external Peer Mentor

The Peer Mentor Team believes that one of the benefits of having independent Peer Mentors that were based on campus, but worked for an outside organisation, was that it made it safer for students to discuss the issues they were experiencing confidentially with an impartial person. These conversations were had "in a peer way", to address any power differential between student and teacher, making talking to a Peer mentor more inviting and appealing to the student. Importantly, this also allowed authentic advocacy between the project partners, to improve the systemic issues affecting students. The Peer Mentors, working at different campuses, had very different experiences. One Peer Mentor was regularly invited into the classroom to join discussions and share his expertise, while the other was not allowed in the classroom, or to participate in online sessions, which inhibited student contact and enrolment in the program. (See Joshua's Story)

Joshua's story

Joshua is a 30-year-old male enrolled in the July 2022 cohort of the Cert IV in Peer Work. Joshua has been managing his own mental health challenges for almost a decade. His psychologist, who he has been seeing since 2015, first suggested to him to look at enrolling in the course. It was appealing because he thought he could bring his own lived experience and skillset to this role. Joshua is a current consumer of mental health services and has good supports around him with family and friends.

Joshua finished high school and has had three attempts at university. His last training was for a position as a surf life saver, for which he was successful. He has always struggled to find gainful employment, something he wanted to do. He has worked at IGA but did not find this meaningful work and was interested in Peer Work to help people, give back, whilst doing work that was purposeful and meaningful.

Joshua, quickly started to fall behind in his assessments, it had been a long time since he had studied. The peer mentor was able to provide mentoring around time management but also made available a room each week on a Wednesday for all students to come and work independently on their assessments, while the mentor was there. Joshua found this very helpful and was able to catch up on his assessments and has stayed on top of them since.

Joshua also spoke about the challenges in the classroom with clashing class dynamics that were very difficult to manage. He identified that talking to the peer mentor, a safe person, independent of TAFE teaching staff, who has been a student himself, had been extremely valuable to helping him get through these classroom challenges and conflict. At one point he had thought about transferring to another campus to get away from it, but the peer mentor reassured him it would pass. Joshua referred to the peer mentor as a "guiding light" in amongst all the classroom chaos.

Joshua is not connected with any peer worker networks outside of the classroom. Occasionally the Peer Mentor was invited into the classroom to share in the conversations relevant to the course content. Joshua really valued the Peer Mentor's input in these conversations, he especially enjoyed hearing of the successes and positive changes happening in the workforce. With no first-hand experience himself, he described it as refreshing to hear that Peer Work actually works!

Joshua was not sure how he will go with the second half of his course given the peer mentoring program is finishing up, but he is grateful for the support he has received by the Peer Mentoring Project. When asked where he saw himself in 5 years' time, he said he would first like to finish the course and find work in the field of peer work. He hopes his family are happy and healthy. He has really enjoyed studying and achieving at this level and is thinking he may want to continue his studies with a Diploma of Mental Health or even a degree in Social Work. He hopes he stays well and can make some money working in this field, helping to make a difference.

Systemic disadvantage

Systemic disadvantage occurs when the system itself creates inequality that advantages some individuals or groups over others. According to the *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia report 2013*, people who are more likely to experience deep and persistent disadvantage include

Indigenous Australians, lone parents, people with a long-term health condition or disability, and people with low educational attainment. By its nature, Lived Experience includes systemic disadvantage resulting from experiences of prejudice and discrimination associated with accessing psychiatric services. Therefore, every Peer Worker and Cert IV student is, or has been, subjected in some way to prejudice, discrimination and entrenched systemic disadvantage. In many cases, the systemic disadvantage is so pervasive it is often invisible to the person experiencing it.

The capacity to successfully complete the Peer Work qualification (and subsequently find employment) is negatively impacted by systemic disadvantage. Unsurprisingly, systemic disadvantage was frequently a topic in Peer Mentoring conversations, emerging in discussions about time management, finding balance, being stuck, imposter syndrome, and an unmet need for validation. As such Individual and Group Peer Mentoring conversations can provide an important opportunity for students to identify the impact of systemic disadvantage in their lives and explore strategies for navigating it.

> *"I doubt myself and second guess myself, I am not sure if I am doing the right thing?"*
>
> *"I am not sure I am meant to be here, I feel like such a fake, and this all feels so surreal. How can I go from using services to working in them, and can I do both?"*
>
> *"I have a little voice telling me I can't do this, I don't deserve this, but the Peer Mentor reminded me that voices don't always tell the truth"*

Feeling like an outsider isn't necessarily a result of imposter syndrome. In some cases, it can occur due to discrimination or exclusion that is systemic in nature. Imposter syndrome creates a feeling of being an outsider that is caused by internal beliefs. Discrimination also creates a feeling of being an outsider, but the feeling is directly caused by the actions of others. This is important to recognise and discuss in a safe learning environment before a Peer Worker enters the workforce.

'Social determinants of health' is recognised as a central concept in contemporary health promotion and population health, facilitating the emergence of new theoretical models and frameworks. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022) identifies the following social determinants which can influence health equity in positive and negative ways including income and social protection, education, unemployment and job insecurity, working life conditions, food insecurity, housing, basic amenities and the environment, early childhood development, social inclusion and non-discrimination, structural conflict, access to affordable health services. Consequently, support provided by Peer Mentors included conversations with project participants about social determinants that may impact their capacity to complete study.

> *"We get by, and sometimes our adult children bring us groceries when we need them."*
>
> *"I am lucky I have a roof over my head, it hasn't always been that way."*
>
> *"I have a mental illness, but I take my medication and my psychiatrist says I am the best he has seen me in years."*
>
> *"I paid for the course myself, it was a lot of money, I didn't think to ask if I could get a concession or if there was a scholarship, no one told me, I guess it's my fault, because I never asked."*

"I live with my parents, there is no way I could get my own place."

"I fled a domestic violent marriage."

"Caring for my husband is a full-time job, I had to stop working."

"I find it hard to concentrate and stay on track, I am not sure where the time goes."

See Gordana's story

Post qualification opportunities

When you complete your TAFE course and get your qualification, what's next? Some students enrolled in the Peer Mentoring Project were beginning to think and wonder how you go from getting a qualification to using it in paid employment. They wondered how they would stay connected with Peers, and what are the best Peer networks to join. Peer Mentoring conversations exploring post qualification employment mentoring was very useful and helped alleviate some of the unknown.

"I've finished and graduated but I was still unsure if I had what it took to work as a Peer Worker, or if I really wanted to. The course bought up a lot of my own personal trauma triggers, that I am still dealing with. I still wanted to stay connected with Peers, so loved joining the co-reflection group."

"To be honest I don't think too far ahead, I have just been trying to get through the course. But the idea of applying for jobs and going for interviews terrifies me."

"My network of peers are the other students, not sure what I am going to do when I finish the course, we will miss each other, but I am sure we will still keep in touch."

"I hope the Co-reflection can continue, like an alumnus, where we could all still join, and mentor each other, even after we finish the course."

Gordana's story

Gordana is a Brisbane girl, who lives alone in her inner suburbs unit and first enrolled mid-year 2020. However, she had trouble concentrating; had some personal difficulties come up; realised her medication was not working as well as it was; and it all became too hard. Consequently, she dropped out. Gordana comments "the TAFE teacher was great and encouraged me to keep going; the teacher gave me extensions, but at that time I just could not do it." She re-enrolled in the Certificate IV Peer Work at the beginning of 2022.

She uses public transport to travel to campus as she does not own a car. She is on the Disability Support Pension and finds it difficult financially and supplements her income by doing a little bit of sewing and mending. Ideally, she would like to find a part-time job approx. 20 hours a week. Gordana is registered with a disability employment agency to help her find work but realises not owning a car may be a barrier to finding employment.

Gordana started studying nursing at university and despite doing well, she had to drop out when she was two thirds of the way through. She later started to study teaching, but never completed it. She has also previously studied administration and completed a Certificate III in Retail at TAFE. She has worked in paid roles in retail, office administration and for a communication company. However, she has mainly worked in voluntary, unpaid roles.

She was motivated to study the Certificate IV in Peer Work because she had a mental illness and could use this to gain employment. Gordana said the teacher introduced her to the Peer Mentor and she enrolled in the program in individual and group mentoring. She though t it was a good opportunity for students to get together online.

She comments "the Peer Mentor is a supportive person, a good listener who gives honest feedback. I really valued their Lived Experience because the teacher does not have it. I found the group supervision a bonus because we got two Peer Mentors and would have liked it to be more frequent than once a fortnight."

The course content was more intensive than previous study and more people orientated and personal. She does not mind online learning, then working your way through learner's guides. She goes into class for role plays but would prefer more face-to-face classes. She liked the advocacy unit because she learnt how to speak up for herself and others.

She completed her placement at Footprints Community in Fortitude Valley which required taking two buses and approx. one hour travel time from her home. She worked with the Art group, called Chill, Chat and Create. After completing the required 80 hours of placement, Gordana has continued as a volunteer. She just has her placement reflections to do and submit then she has finished the course.

Participant Feedback

An anonymous online student evaluation survey was designed in Survey Monkey. During November 2022 the link was provided to all 30 students who had participated in the Project. 30 per cent of Project participants completed the survey, giving a sufficiently large sample size to be indicative of the target population (i.e., students who participated in the Project).

Promotion

Participants primarily found out about the Peer Mentoring Project from either the Peer Mentor (47 per cent) or from TAFE QLD teaching staff (42 per cent). A comparatively small percentage (11 per cent) first heard about the Project from other students.

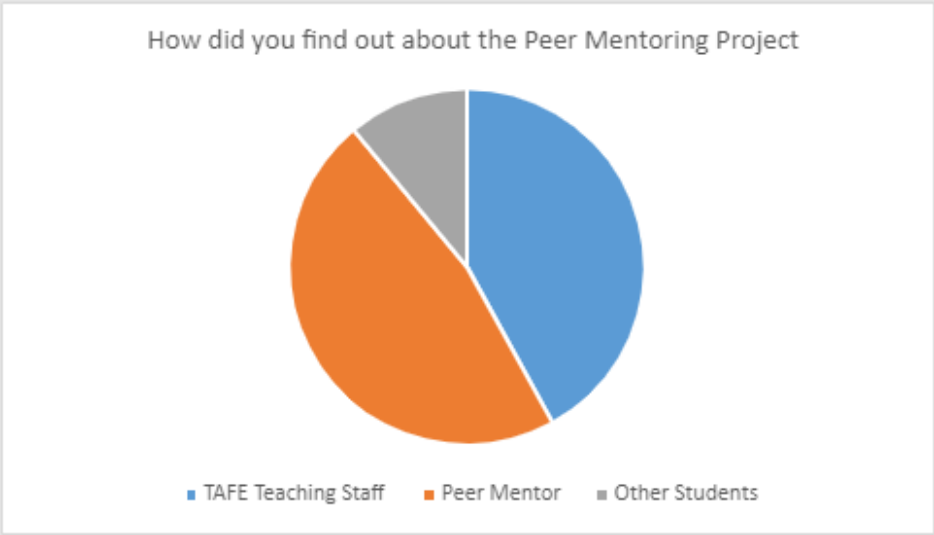


Figure 22: Source of initial information about the Project.

Preferred communication method

Although it was important that Peer Mentors were flexible and offered a variety of communication options to participants, 89 per cent of survey respondents indicated a preference for face-to-face connection with the Peer Mentor.

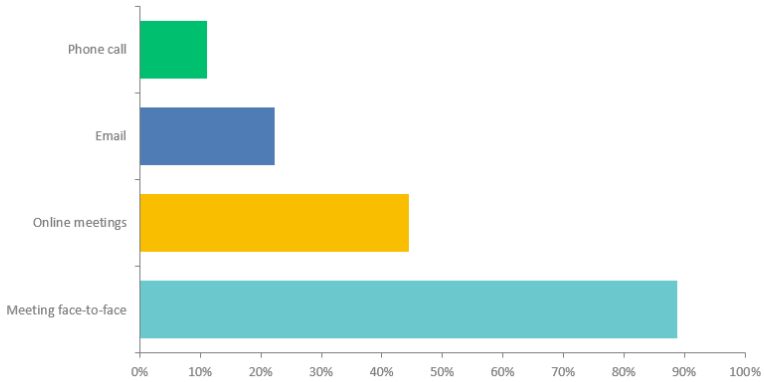


Figure 3: Preferred method of contact with Peer Mentors

Preferred mentoring delivery option

78 per cent of survey respondents identified a preference for accessing both individual and group mentoring; 21 per cent preferred individual mentoring only; and only 1 per cent preferred group mentoring as the only support option.

Impact on confidence to complete the qualification

In response to the statement “my participation in the Peer Mentoring Project helped me feel more confident to complete my studies”, 90 per cent of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed. The remaining 10 per cent of respondents were neutral.

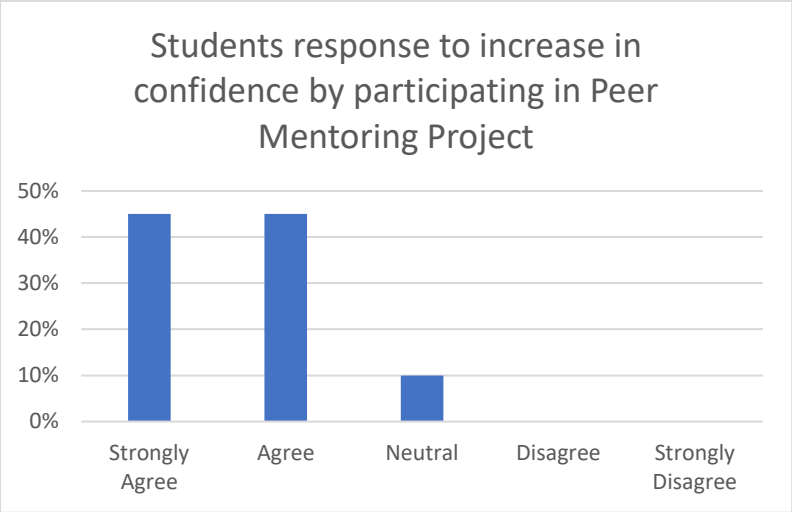


Figure 34: Impact on student confidence

Impact on capacity to resolve problems and issues impact study

All respondents either strongly agreed (45 per cent) or agreed (55 per cent) with the statement “my participation in the Peer Mentoring Project helped me feel more prepared to resolve problems and issues with my studies.”

Impact on capacity to connect with Peer networks

Connection to peer networks is vital to ensuring sustainability and best practice. 90 per cent of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my participation in the Peer Mentoring Project helped me connect and broaden my peer networks”.

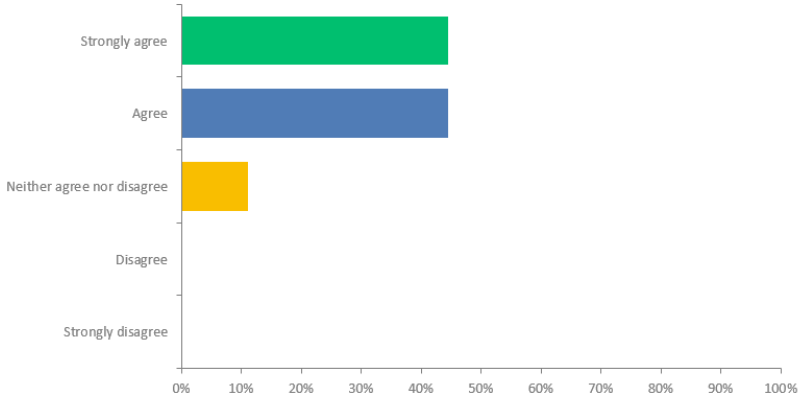


Figure 45: Impact on connection with Peer networks

Participant perception of Peer Mentors

Survey respondents predominantly strongly agreed (55%) or agreed (35%) with the statement "Peer Mentors listen well, are compassionate and empathic, motivate others, and give truthful opinions and accurate information. I saw these traits in the Peer Mentor".

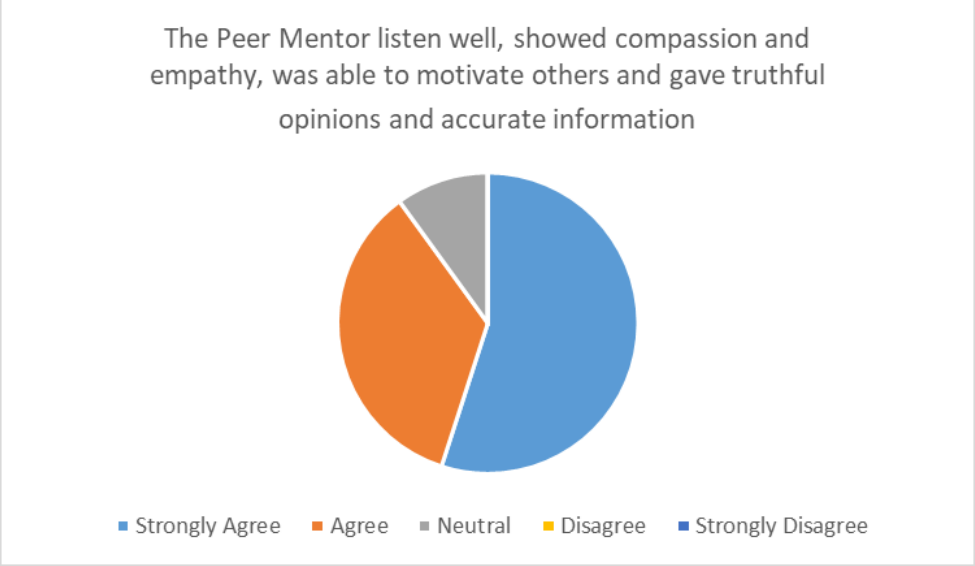


Figure 56: Perception of Peer Mentors

Participant perception of Peer Mentoring support

The below comments by survey respondents indicate individual participant perceptions of the support provided by the Peer Mentoring Project.

> *"The Peer Mentors prioritised the students and provided a safe space to discuss whatever they needed; they listened."*
>
> *"They recognised their privilege and could acknowledge the impacts and barriers of systemic disadvantage faced by many of the students."*
>
> *"A different, more equal, power dynamic than that between teacher and student."*

"Perspectives, understanding and knowledge that expands the teaching."

"They role modeled Peer Work."

"They understood Peer Work in Practice and shared real-life examples then supported discussions to translate theory into practice."

"They understood the TAFE system and adult learning and shared their wisdom in supporting navigation."

"They offered students optimism and hope, reassurance, and encouragement."

"They shared their resources, networks, and connections to create possibilities."

Identified Issues and Barriers

Throughout the project a number of issues relating to the course intake, teaching processes and Industry Connection were identified and discussed directly with TAFE Queensland and the Project Advisory Committee. These have been summarized in the table and discussed below:

1.	Student Enrolment
2.	Sustainable communication with industry service providers
3.	Lived Experience teaching practices and resources
4.	Separation of Consumer and Carer Streams
5.	Sustainable Peer Mentoring for Cert IV in Mental Health Peer Work
6.	Consistent delivery
7.	More knowledge and understanding for the Peer Workforce Industry

Table 6: Identified issues and barriers

1. Student Enrolment

The project identified differences in the enrolment process between campuses. At the Gold Coast campus students enrolled online and were required to watch a short video clip about the course and tick a box to say they had done so before they could complete an enrolment application. At Mooloolaba campus students also completed their enrolment application online, however they were required to participate in an intake interview with the teachers before completing their enrolment. At this intake interview the teacher's provided information about the course requirements. Importantly, the interview process gave potential students a chance to ask questions before completing their enrolment. However, during intake interviews observed by the Project Peer Coordinator, it was not clear that enough information had been shared to enable students to make an informed choice about proceeding with enrolment. It was noted at both campuses that anyone was welcome to enroll, without the necessity to ensure that a person of lived experience was ready to embark on a year of full-time study, given their experiences and histories. It was also noted that in

one case, a student brought their NDIS support worker to the interview, and they also attended classes with the student.

Although a philosophy of "everyone deserves a chance" can be seen as inclusive, caring and encouraging, it can also potentially set people up for failure, resulting in a negative impact on the expectations of Peer Workers and employing organisations. The Cert IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification is intended to prepare entry level workers for professional practice. Although there is some therapeutic value in the course, in the sense that it supports personal development and growth for people identifying as either a consumer and/or Carer, the Cert IV Mental Health Peer Work course can be personally confronting. Furthermore, Peer Work roles do not operate as a disability supported employment option. They are highly complex professional roles in demanding settings, supporting vulnerable people.

We believe the lack of upfront information about the intensity of Peer Work roles and the nature of the course content may be contributing to the number of students who fail to complete the course. In reviewing this process, the notions of informed choice, personal autonomy and personal responsibility should be at the forefront. If this process is done well, we believe it would contribute to fewer student dropouts and a higher rate of graduating students. We also note that dropout and completion rates are vastly different between the Gold Coast and Mooloolaba Campuses.

Concerns about the enrolment and intake processes were raised with TAFE QLD management by the project team. Subsequently, TAFE QLD has now committed to implementing a more thorough, informed and consistent approach across both campuses. An intake interview process will take place with all potential students prior to enrolment at both campuses to clearly outline to prospective students the requirements of the program, for example, placements and assessments. Additionally, as a collaborative activity, the Peer Mentors and TAFE QLD educators have drafted a Student Information Factsheet, customised for each campus, to be provided to all students at the intake interview.

TAFE QLD has also determined that all students will need an NDIS Worker Screening Clearance, and possibly additional clearances to enrol in the course. This new requirement is included in the information/fact sheet and outlined on the TAFE QLD website.

2. Sustainable communication with industry service providers

Throughout the project the Project Team actively engaged with local industry in both the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regions to identify placement opportunities for students. The Project Team facilitated five online meetings with an average of ten service providers at each meeting.

Some industry bodies reported they had a working relationship with TAFE QLD, however the majority reported they had had difficulties identifying the appropriate contact within TAFE QLD to communicate with. Others reported they had previously experienced effective communication with TAFE QLD, however the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had effectively closed those communication channels and they were yet to be reactivated. It was suggested that appointing a

single person or role within TAFE QLD could make it easier for industry bodies to communicate with TAFE Qld. As a result of these discussions, TAFE Qld Product Lead has agreed to take on the responsibility of ensuring regular communication with sector stakeholders, with a view to information sharing and enhancing placement options. Meetings will occur quarterly from February 2023 onwards.

Teachers also found these meetings useful and were invited to join and participate, with the last meeting being led by teachers, where they explained the Vocational Student Placement Booklet and what was required of Students and Industry during Placement. At the request of Industry this online session was recorded and distributed for those unable to attend.

All agreed that meeting quarterly would keep the lines of communication between TAFE QLD and industry open in an ongoing way, to address issues arising from placements, and for new staff to learn TAFE QLD processes for Vocational Student Placement. TAFE QLD agreed to take carriage of organising these meetings once the Peer Mentoring Project comes to an end.

3. Lived Experience teaching practices and resources

"I really valued [the Peer Mentor's] *Lived Experience because the teacher does not have it."* (Gordana's Story)

The project identified that the student learning materials require a comprehensive update to reflect contemporary practice frameworks, recent workforce developments and Lived Experience preferred language.

Assessment tasks for all units needs a comprehensive redesign. The level of assessment for most units is excessive, often including items that do not relate directly to assessment requirements. Although there were several notable exceptions, assessment tasks were poorly designed, needlessly complex, and inappropriately worded (e.g., referring to "support worker" rather than Peer Support worker). There was also a lack of variety in the type of assessment tasks.

A comprehensive quality improvement overhaul of teaching and learning materials would best be accomplished by creating a temporary position focused on this update in consultation with teaching staff. We believe that requiring teaching staff to evaluate, update and/or redesign course materials on top of existing duties is unrealistic and would likely contribute to staff stress or burnout. TAFE QLD has committed to investigating this issue further.

4. Separation of Consumer and Carer Streams

The Project Team identified the need for a clear distinction between the Consumer Stream of study and the Carer Stream of Study within the Cert IV, from the point of enrolment. The Project Team believes the first best step to do this would be to have a clear discussion with students about which stream they are enrolling in, based on their lived experience. The choice impacts the units they complete, which qualification they gain, and ultimately the workforce they work in, (Consumer or Carer). Currently, the two different units are not offered separately based on the experience of the

student, and each stream is not taught and delivered by a different person identifying with that Lived Experience.

TAFE QLD has agreed to address this by bringing in LE presenters specific to the identified role to add and supplement the specific perspective to each unit. Clear reference to the separation of Consumer and Carer Streams will also be provided in the student information/fact sheet.

5. Sustainable Peer Mentoring for Cert IV Mental Health Peer Work students

There were concerns expressed by the students and Peer Mentors that mentoring for Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work students would not receive ongoing funding and so cease to be a support option available to students. The need for students to connect regularly with other students and Peer Mentors is seen as vital to a Peer Workers professional development. The importance of it being facilitated independently and not by teaching staff was also considered crucial.

Due to the concerns documented through this Project and broader concerns about the delivery of this qualification that have been expressed at both a state and national level, project partner QLEWN has created a position statement on the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work (see Appendix 5 QLEWN Position Statement) Furthermore, QLEWN has committed to exploring ways to continue this vital work beyond the project.

See Sue's Story

6. Consistent delivery - the tale of two campuses

The project highlighted some significant differences in the delivery of the course across the two campuses, despite being delivered by the same training organisation. There appeared to be limited communication between the two campuses, each course being run autonomously. Perhaps if more opportunities to connect, share, and learn from each other were available it may have led to more positive results for everyone and, most importantly the students.

The Cert IV in MHPW has been offered at one campus since 2017 with individuals with a Lived Experience key to its establishment and implementation. The other campus began delivering the course in 2020, with what seems to be a less dedicated Lived Experienced input. At one campus, the same Lived Experience teaching team has been in place since it began, whilst there has been changes in teaching staff and has needed to draw on teachers from other qualifications to assist with delivery.

There are other differences between the delivery of the course at the two campuses, including the delivery mode: at one campus the course is delivered face to face in a classroom environment over two full days each week. At the other, the course is primarily delivered online. The delivery of the course face to face in the classroom allows relationships to be established – an essential component to Peer Work and something online teaching does not always establish.

Sue's story

Sue is a 50-year-old single mum with an adult son. She lives with her dad, 10 minutes from campus where she began her study in the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work in January 2022. She was working full time when she began studying but found it difficult to do both. She currently is not working and is living off her savings with the financial support of her dad, who is on a pension.

In 2017 Sue got a job as a support worker with PHAMS, started attending the Brisbane North PHN network meetings, and studied the Certificate IV in Community Services. She was invited to join the local PHN in Cotton Tree Maroochydore Consumer Advisory Group where she first met her current TAFE teacher and other local peer workers. This was her introduction to Peer Work and when she fell in love with being in Peer Space. Despite this connection with Peer networks, Sue is one of three students in the class who have never worked as Peer Workers prior to studying the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

Sue identifies that other studies she has completed have been more structured, but she finds the Certificate IV is more personal and interactive, although this could be because there are only six students in the class. However, she believes they created a bond with each other from day one. She does not feel she is ready to do peer work yet, because she is a perfectionist that over thinks things and has not had to share or use her own story in class yet.

"The Peer Mentor has been amazing, has offered stability and grounding, clarity, and perspective as I knew the lecturer/teacher in a previous setting, and we mostly worked well together. I was in a different place back when I first met them than where I am now, and with our history, that can sometimes make it challenging in the classroom. The Peer Mentor normalised things for me, de-escalating me many a time, and had this objectiveness because the Peer Mentor had not known me, how I used to be before. The Peer Mentor would bring me back to earth when I was overthinking. The Peer Mentor just let me be myself. The Peer Mentor created a safe space which was just what I needed. What the Peer Mentor has done in a brief time is phenomenal, a real role model. Because the Peer Mentor had done the course, they knew what was needed."

Sue wanted to do her placement in a public hospital. Because all her treatment was in the private sector, she wanted to see if she could cut it in the public sector – she was curious to see what it was like. She identifies "the Peer Mentor was amazing and the one who helped me navigate through coordinating my own placement, and I am so glad I stuck at it to get what I wanted."

The course sits in different faculties at each campus: The faculty of Communities and the Faculty of Nursing. All units of the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work are contextualised and delivered by the Lived Experience teachers at one campus, but at the other some units are delivered by other teachers and include other students.

For example, the unit HLTWHS001 *Participate in workplace health and safety* is a generic unit included in an array of courses. Peer Work students at one campus would do this unit with a teacher (who does not have a lived experience) who is delivering this unit to students completing other non-Lived Experience courses. If this course is in the Nursing faculty the materials may be contextualised to nursing, not Peer Work.

It is important to note that given regional and sector needs, variations between campuses may be preferred or requested and this is not uncommon practice for RTOs.

The LE Peer mentoring Project Team is aware that there are regulations, and complexities involved in running an RTO, and understands the management and compliance pressures involved. TAFE QLD is not the only RTO delivering the Certificate IV in MHPW in Queensland and it is reasonable to question how all RTO's delivering this course get around some of these complexities with fewer resources and, how the quality of their delivery aligns with best practice in delivering the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

7. More knowledge and understanding for the Peer Workforce Industry

When it comes to knowing what a Peer Worker is, and what they do, and what they should do, the expectations and definitions are not clearly defined, even for those who already employ Peer Workers. This topic is often hotly debated between members of the Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce. Therefore, documents like the *National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Guidelines* help us to define good practice and give us the foundations we need to educate our workforce.

Although we have focused our interactions with students and teachers towards improving the experience of completing the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work, throughout this project it was also necessary to interact with employers and potential employers to increase placement options for students. Through these meetings and conversations, it became obvious to the team that more work was needed to support organisations to employ, maintain and sustain a Peer Workforce.

In the team's interactions with local service providers employing peer workers, we were given an insight into the diverse ways peers are employed to support mental health service delivery, both in Community and Hospital and Health Services. However, many managers and supervisors have little understanding of Peer Work and its potential as an emerging practice.

We found that many Peer Workers are not always supervised by other people that have relevant Lived Experience working from a Peer Perspective. Even when Lived Experience supervision was available, peers are supervised by people practicing from differing perspectives that are not necessarily peer to them (for example, Carer peers educating and supervising peers working from consumer perspectives with Consumers.)

The *Queensland Framework for the Development of the Mental Health Lived Experience Workforce* was launched in November 2019. The framework and associated documents were designed as a toolkit for embedding people with lived experience of mental health challenges into public, private and NGO workplaces. While there has been some promising work taking place, much more is needed. The time for this work is now, and we believe industry is ready and willing. This work is an essential component to the overall improvement of the development of the Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce.

Recommendations

To better support the development of a Peer Workforce, the Project Team and partners have made several recommendations which will require the support of Government, TAFE and other RTOs, potential employers and students. If followed, we believe these recommendations will do much to rectify the current systemic disadvantage faced by students in the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work.

1. Peer mentoring

a) Peer Mentoring Programs should be recurrently funded and available for all students studying the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

b) Peer Mentoring Programs should include support from Lived Experienced Mentors, providing both online and face-to-face opportunities to students. Mentors should be independently employed, but co-located with the RTO, and supported by teachers and training organisation staff.

2. Lived Experience Teachers, Trainers, and Assessors

a) A capacity building initiative should be implemented to increase the availability of qualified Lived Experience Educators, Trainers, and Assessors across Queensland

b) Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) should ensure that the Cert IV in Peer Work qualification is delivered only by Lived Experience educators with Peer Work industry experience.

c) RTOs should encourage teachers to invite into the classroom people practicing from a range of specialist perspectives, including drug and alcohol addiction, First Nations, Multicultural perspectives, Hearing Voices, LGBTIQA+, Blood Born Virus, Perinatal, Eating disorders, Carer/Family/Kin, Consumer etc.

d) RTOs must ensure that Lived Experience supervision/co-reflection is provided to all their Designated Lived Experience Educators

3. Course Enrolment and Intake Processes

a) RTOs should ensure that during the enrolment process students are aware that a criminal history check will be necessary to complete the course placement requirement and for future employment in the workforce. This should not exclude a student from enrolling but can be a point of discussion when reviewing course readiness.

b) The intake process must ensure that students have a clear understanding of the course content, commitments required to complete the course and possible career pathways.

c) RTOs offer Consumer Peer Work and Carer Peer Work as identifiably separate streams and ensure students understand which stream they identify with from their own lived experience and which they intend to practice from as peer workers.

4. Vocational Student Placements

a) RTOs require students complete their placement at organisations that employ peer workers and are supervised by a person in a designated Lived Experience role

b) That placement organisations must clearly communicate student requirements upfront e.g., vaccinations for Vocational Student placements, Criminal history screening.

c) TAFE Queensland continues to meet regularly with local service providers to enable ongoing quality placement opportunities that will support the students transition to the workforce.

d) TAFE Queensland ensures Student Placement Deed of Agreements are current and in place for the placement component of course and that students are fully informed of these placement opportunities at the beginning of the course.

5. Peer Workforce Industry

a) Organisations employing Peer Workers should complete “readiness” activities, including cultural awareness work required to ensure a safe working environment for all Lived Experience (Peer) Workers.

b) Organisations employing Peer Workers should provide ongoing supervision to ensure a safe working environment.

c) Organisations employing Peer Workers should commit to supporting the development of the Lived Experience workforce through providing students with quality placement opportunities.

Appendix 1. PAC Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program

Project Advisory Committee

Background

The Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program is a collaboration between Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH), Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN), TAFE Queensland (TAFE QLD) and WorkAbility Queensland, through Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA). The project is funded by Department Employment Small Business and Training (DESBT) under the NDIS training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS), an initiative delivered on behalf of WorkAbility Qld.

The partnering organisations came together to explore the supply, demand, quality, and barriers to completing training for the Peer Workforce in Queensland. Results of a state-wide survey showed that many respondents who had undertaken a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work felt unsupported and were overwhelmed by the course content and assessment requirements. For those yet to undertake a Certificate IV, cost was a significant barrier. A commonly discussed issue relating to finding meaningful placement opportunities for this course was also highlighted in survey responses.

The Peer Work Student Mentoring Program was developed in response to the concerns raised about completing the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work and aims to provide a reliable framework and resources for the provision of effective student support for the future.

Project Aims

The project will support students enrolled in the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work at TAFE QLD (Gold Coast and East Coast (Mooloolaba) Campuses). The project staff will: work with students to identify their individualised support needs; provide individual mentoring support; facilitate group reflective practice and support the identification of appropriate services for placement opportunities. They will also identify emerging issues impacting on students and develop processes, pathways, partnerships, and resources to support the sustainability of the project.

The Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator working in collaboration with the Project Advisory Committee, will be responsible for leading the project process including writing project briefs, designing project methodology, convening advisory committees, consultation with the sector and key stakeholders and preparing high quality written submissions and reports against agreed timeframes.

Two **Lived Experience Peer Mentors** will report to the Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator and provide Individual, and group based mentoring support to students enrolled in the Cert IV

Mental Health Peer Work. They will work closely with the TAFE QLD teachers delivering the course in Mooloolaba and on the Gold Coast to support and enrich the students' learning opportunities through mentoring and support processes, including navigating placement opportunities.

Purpose

The Project Advisory Committee formally joins the project partners together, acknowledging that critical input from each of the partnering organisations is required to achieve the project aims. The Committee will provide their advice, guidance and expertise whilst ensuring connection with other relevant work and broader sector initiatives

Membership

The meeting will be co-chaired by QAMH and QLEWN members.

Membership is made up of the following nominated representatives from partnering organisations:

Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH)

- Sarah Childs, Director Sector Engagement and Development (Chair)
- Amanda Habermann -Peer Project Coordinator

Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN)

- Paula Arro, President QLEWN and Lived Experience Engagement Coordinator, Brisbane North PHN (Co- Chair)
- Eschleigh Balzamo, CEO Brook RED
- Viv Kissane, CEO Peach Tree

TAFE Queensland

- Beverley Charnley, Community Services Product Lead
- Michael Burbank, Teacher, East Coast
- Janine Hogg, Teacher, Gold Coast Campus

WorkAbility Qld

- Mandy Strathearn, Project Manager NTSSS, CSIA

Other Members can be invited to join the Steering Committee by agreement of the partnering organisations.

Responsibilities

Representatives will be responsible for:

- Providing guidance and advice from the perspective of their organisation, including commenting on draft documentation and reports as required
- Providing access to relevant support from their organisation to meet project objectives
- Attending all meetings or sending a proxy representative if unavailable and notifying the secretariat in advance
- Ensuring their organisations are kept inform of project progress

Meeting Arrangements

- The schedule of meetings will be determined after the first meeting in response to the volume of work that is identified as needing to be undertaken
- At a minimum, the Steering Committee will meet every 4 weeks, however fortnightly meetings will be scheduled at the project commencement
- The meetings will end at the completion of the project
- All meetings will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams and be an hour in duration.
- There may be occasional out of session requests and contact to seek advice and provide information and updates
- QAMH will lead the formation of the Committee, Co-Chair the meetings and be responsible for its ongoing functioning.

Quorum and Decision Making

The Steering Committee comprises 4 partner members and other members, when invited. Meetings will only proceed if a representative from QAMH, QLEWN, and TAFE QLD (Member or proxy) is in attendance.

Confidentiality

Members are asked to be mindful of the confidentiality of information shared within the reference group meeting and are requested to not disclose information from these meetings to outside parties.

Conflict of interest

Members are asked to declare any potential, real or perceived conflict of interest at any meeting if it relates to an issue or decision under consideration.

Appendix 2. Project Plan

Mental Health Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Project

Project Plan

Purpose

To pilot a project which increases Lived Experience support to students studying the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work, to ensure a higher success rate of qualified Peer Workers to the Lived Experience workforce in Queensland.

Background

The Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program is a collaboration between Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH), Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN), TAFE Queensland (TAFE QLD) and WorkAbility Queensland, through Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA). The project is funded by Department Employment Small Business and Training (DESBT) under the (National Disability Insurance Scheme) NDIS training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS), an initiative delivered on behalf of WorkAbility Qld

The partnering organisations came together to explore the supply, demand, quality, and barriers to completing training for the Peer Workforce in Queensland. Results of a state-wide survey showed that many respondents who had undertaken a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work felt unsupported and were overwhelmed by the course content and assessment requirements. For those yet to undertake a Certificate IV, cost was a significant barrier. A commonly discussed issue relating to finding meaningful placement opportunities for this course was also highlighted in survey responses.

The Peer Work Student Mentoring Program was developed in response to the concerns raised about completing the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work and aims to provide a reliable framework and resources for the provision of effective student support for the future.

Project Aims

The project will support students enrolled in the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work at TAFE QLD (Gold Coast and East Coast (Mooloolaba) Campuses). The project staff will: work with students to identify their individualised support needs; provide individual mentoring support; facilitate group reflective practice and support the identification of appropriate services for placement opportunities. They will also identify emerging issues impacting on students and develop processes, pathways, partnerships, and resources to support the sustainability of the project.

The Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator working in collaboration with the Project Advisory Committee, will be responsible for leading the project process including writing project briefs, designing project methodology, convening advisory committees, consultation with the sector and key stakeholders and preparing high quality written submissions and reports against agreed timeframes.

Two Lived Experience Peer Mentors will report to the Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator and provide Individual, and group based mentoring support to students enrolled in the Cert IV Mental Health Peer Work. They will work closely with the TAFE QLD teachers who are delivering the course in Mooloolaba and on the Gold Coast to support and enrich the students' learning opportunities through mentoring and support processes, including navigating placement opportunities

Project Scope

The scope for the project is confined to the delivery of individual and group peer mentor support, with a detailed report on completion.

Deliverables

The deliverables of the project are:

- A report which provides a comprehensive outline of the work completed including identified key issues and challenges, opportunities and potential solutions, project findings and potential recommendations.
- An action plan for the mental health peer workforce sector to guide potential work, partnerships and alliances and solutions to issues identified in the report.

This may include:

- Recommendations for strategies needed to encourage investment in appropriate training and skills priorities and/or packages within the education sector and for government.
- Development of business cases for further work required which has been identified through recommendations in the report.

Lived Experience Supervision for Project Staff

As part of the project, Brook RED will provide 30 Lived Experience supervision sessions to Project Staff to support them in their Practice and work throughout the project.

Project Governance

The project is funded though Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) and provided by the NDIS Training and Support Strategy (NTSSS) at Workability QLD and the responsibility for reporting against deliverables belongs to QAMH. To ensure that the project is guided by the sector, a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) will be established comprising of key stakeholders and representatives from the community mental health and wellbeing sector and other stakeholders identified. The purpose of the advisory committee is to provide guidance, recommendations, advice, and networking suggestions from the perspective of their organisation (including commenting on draft documentation and reports if required) to ensure that project objectives are achieved. It is anticipated that the PAC will facilitate discussion and consideration of a wide variety of views and opinions on the project. The PAC Terms of Reference gives further details regarding the PAC purpose. QAMH will use the advice from the PAC to inform final decisions on the project.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC) members

PAC members include the following representation:

Organisation	PAC member	Role
QAMH		
Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH)	Sarah Childs	Director Sector Engagement and Development
Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH)	Amanda Habermann	Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator
Workability		
Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) Workability	Mandy Strathearn	Project Manager NTSSS Community Services Industry Alliance
QLEWN		
Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN)	Eschleigh Balzamo	QLEWN Management Committee Member and CEO Brook RED
Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN)	Paula Arro	QLEWN Management Committee Member (president) and Lived Experience Engagement Coordinator, Brisbane North PHN
Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN)	Viv Kissane	QLEWN Management Committee Member and CEO/Founder Peach tree Perinatal Wellness
TAFE QLD		
TAFE QLD	Beverly Charnley	Community Services Product Lead
TAFE QLD	Janine Hogg	Teacher, Gold Coast Campus
TAFE QLD	Michael Burbank	Teacher, East Coast

Other members can be included if agreed that this would be beneficial to the outcomes of the project.

Method

Critical chain project management

Critical chain project management (or CCPM) takes the critical path method (CPM) one step further.

While the critical path method defines the length of time needed to get each critical activity done from the beginning of the project to the end, it can often be unrealistic when the time comes to put it into practice.

Critical chain project management addresses those issues by allowing a bit more time for the human elements of your project — like delays and resourcing issues.

In critical chain project management, you have a few buffers built in that your critical chain can use without derailing everything else, so that your entire project does not have to go off track just because life happens.

Project activities

This project aims to conduct the below:

- Monthly PAC meetings
- Recruit, induct, and orientate project staff
- Enrol students in the Peer Workforce Mentoring Program
- Provide a total of 30 Individual Students with Peer Work Mentoring Sessions
- Provide 20 Group Based Peer Work Mentoring Sessions
- Provide a detailed report on the Peer Workforce Mentoring Program

Reporting requirements

As per contractual obligations set out by funding body, is required to report monthly which will be completed by QAMH.

To ensure accuracy of the data collected for the reporting process, Project Staff must ensure that all meetings and mentoring sessions are recorded. This is to be updated at a minimum weekly.

Internal reporting mechanisms

Monthly updates to be provided to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the format of an informal discussion or a formal documented process is to be decided. Update should include:

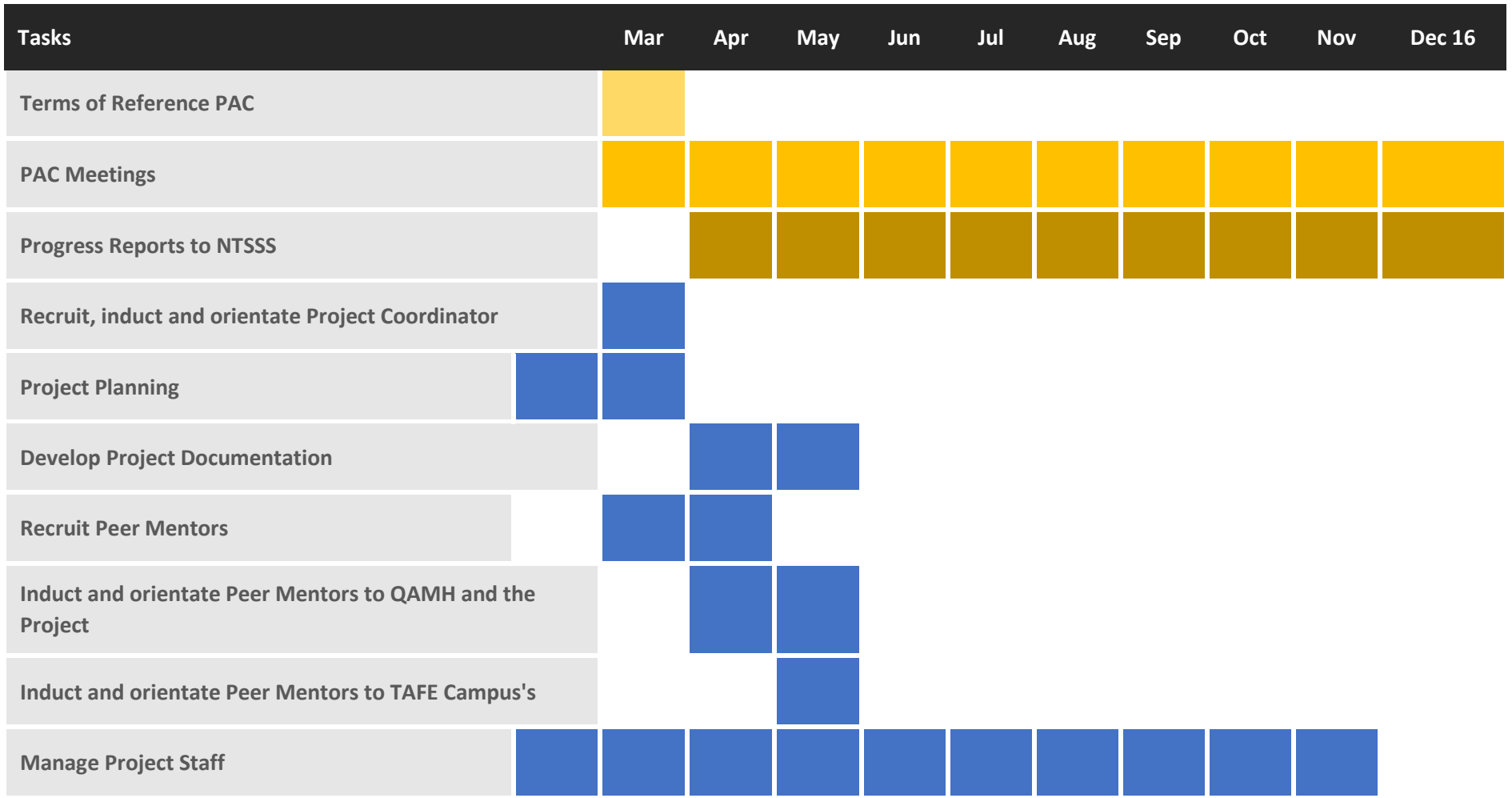
- Project status update against deliverables
- Issues to be considered such as potential delays and/or major risks to project progress and strategies to ensure deliverable will be met in line with contractual obligations
- Drafts of preliminary findings and recommendations
- Drafts of reports and documentation (CEO will have final sign off on the documentation for the project including the final report and action plan.)

Reporting on project progress will also be provided to the project advisory committee monthly, in the form of general project status update.

Key stakeholders in the project

Stakeholder	Interest/ context	Level of involvement (Responsible/ Accountable/ Consulted / Informed)
QAMH Stakeholders		
CEO	Overall accountability and sign off on documentation and direction of project	Responsible
Director Sector Engagement and Development	Overall accountability to ensure milestones and deliverables are met in agreed timeframes.	Responsible
Project Lead	Overall responsibility for project, including day to day administration and coordination of the project.	Responsible
Project Advisory Committee	Responsible for provision of advice and guidance and input to the project.	Accountable
Other QAMH staff		Informed
External Stakeholders		
CSIA, Workability	Partner PAC member Provide input to the project Funding body	Consulted, informed Report to
QLEWN	Partner PAC member Provide input to the project	Consulted, informed
TAFE QLD	Partner PAC Membership Provide input to the project	Consulted, informed
Students enrolled in the Cert IV in MHPW	Participate in the project Provide input to the project via Evaluation	Consult
Community Mental Health Organisations, including QAMH members	Provide input to the project via Evaluation	Consult

Timeline of Tasks



Tasks	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec 16
Enrol Students in the Project										
Delivery of Individual Peer mentoring sessions										
Delivery of Group Mentoring Sessions										
External LE Supervision for Project Staff										
Data gathering and Evaluation										
Mapping of career pathways and educational options										
Develop action and implementation plan for future work										
Write project Report including recommendations and submit										

Risk Management

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Consequence(s)	Person responsible	Contingency strategy
COVID-19	**Moderate**	**Moderate**	Mentoring session unable to be conducted face-to-face Potential impact on the scope, breadth and progress of the project	**Project Lead**	Meetings to be conducted via telephone/teleconference Mentoring to be held online or via teleconference
Recruitment of appropriately qualified and skilled project staff	**Moderate**	**High**	Impact on all project deliverables		Promote through Peer networks, utilising QLEWN PAC members Ensure staff are remunerated at appropriate level for autonomy and skill required for remote roles
Students do not engage with Peer Mentor Program	**Low**	**High**	Potential impact on the scope, breadth and progress of the project	**Project Lead** **Peer Mentors**	investigate reason for reluctance, and devise improvement strategy Work closely with TAFE teacher to promote program benefits
Scope creep	**Moderate**	**Moderate**	Project scope and requirements changing or exceeding original plan/agreement	**Project Lead** **Project Chair**	Ensure the project's scope is clearly defined and all parties have a clear understanding on this Document each scope creep in a change request and seek authorisation from the Project Chair
Lack of communication, causing lack of clarity and confusion amongst PAC members	**Moderate**	**Moderate**	Potential impact on the scope, breadth and progress of the project	**Project Lead**	Correct any misunderstanding immediately Ensure Meetings and Actions are minuted
Exceeding budget	**Low**	**High**	Potential impact on the delivery and progress of the project	**Project Lead** **Project Chair**	All project expenditure to be checked against the budget prior to approval and payment

LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE				
	Insignificant	**Minor**	**Moderate**	**Major**	**Catastrophic**
Almost Certain	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Rare	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High

Appendix 3. Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator Position Description

Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator (0.6FTE)
POSITION DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND
The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) is the peak body for the community mental health and wellbeing sector in Queensland. We represent more than 100 organisations and stakeholders involved in the delivery of community mental health services across the state. At a national level, we collaborate with Community Mental Health Australia, and we work alongside our members to build capacity and to advocate on their behalf on issues that impact their operations and people who access their services.

The Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN) is a focused state-wide peak body led by, with and for the Lived Experience workforce within mental health, alcohol and other drugs and suicide prevention. QLEWN is focused on ensuring that the Lived Experience workforce has access to appropriate discipline-specific supervision and support, networking and professional development opportunities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health reforms, promotes and drives community mental wellbeing service delivery for all Queenslanders, through its influence and collaboration with its membership and its strategic partners. QLEWN acts as a united voice for Queensland's Lived Experience government, non-government and private workforces to drive focused Lived Experience led advocacy and system reform. QAMH has collaborated with QLEWN to identify and deliver several quality improvement initiatives related to Peer Work Training and Qualifications in Queensland.

PURPOSE
This position has been developed to manage the project: **Peer Work Student Mentoring Program**.

The project will support students enrolled in the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work at TAFE Queensland (Gold Coast and East Coast Campuses). The project staff will: work with students to identify their individualised support needs; provide individual mentoring support; facilitate group reflective practice and support identification of appropriate services for placement opportunities. They will also identify emerging issues impacting on students and develop processes, pathways, partnerships and resources to support the sustainability of the project.

The Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator will lead this project under the guidance of the Director Sector Engagement and Development and the Project Advisory Committee. This role will be responsible for supervising Peer Mentors based on the Gold Coast and East Coast.
The initiative is a collaboration between QAMH, The Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN), TAFE QLD and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS) on behalf of Workability QLD.

PRIMARY DUTIES

The Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator will work in collaboration with project partners (QLEWN, TAFE QLD and NTSSS). A Project Advisory Committee with representation from each partner agency will provide advice to the work of the Project Coordinator. The role will be responsible for the complete project process including writing project briefs, designing project methodology, convening advisory committees, consultation with the sector and key stakeholders and preparing high quality written submissions and reports against agreed timeframes.

This role will be based at the QAMH office (433 Logan Road, Stones Corner). Requirements to travel within the state and/or nationally will be agreed with the Director, Sector Engagement and Development or CEO. Opportunities to work remotely may be negotiated with the successful candidate

The position will receive Peer Practice Supervision from QLEWN member Brook RED.

PRIMARY ACCOUNTABILITIES

The Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator will report to the QAMH Director, Sector Engagement and Development.

DIRECT REPORTS

Two part time Lived Experience Peer Mentors will report to this position.

CRITICAL EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate will have:

- A firsthand Lived Experience of mental health and/or suicidal distress or having accessed services and supports for these and the ability and experience of applying knowledge from this/these experience/s in your work.
- An understanding of and passion for Lived Experience practice and for supporting the professional development of the Lived Experience workforce.
- Experience in and knowledge of the community mental health and wellbeing sector in Queensland and an understanding of the advocacy work of QAMH.
- Experience in and knowledge of the Peer Workforce within the mental health sector.
- Highly developed project management skills and experience in managing projects in entirety using project methodology.
- A sophisticated knowledge of the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work qualification.
- Highly developed time management, administration, organisational and reporting skills with proficiency in MS Office.
- Well-developed, high-level research skills.
- Experience in designing, implementing, and facilitating consultations with key stakeholders.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills, including experience in producing high level reports for key audiences.
- Demonstrated stakeholder engagement experience.
- Demonstrated leadership skills with an understanding of human resource management.
- Experience in supervising other staff and a sound ability in mentoring/ coaching technique.
- Ability to work as part of a team whilst maintaining responsibility for self-direction and management of the project working to specific deadlines.

DESIRABLE EXPERIENCE

- Experience working with a membership-based organisation.
- Tertiary qualifications in a relevant field such as psychology, social work, community development and community services or social sciences.
- Project management qualifications.

KEY RESULTS AREA

OPERATIONAL

- Under the guidance of the Director Sector Engagement and Development and with advice from the advisory committee, develop the project methodology and workplans for identified pieces of work.
- Act as secretariat for the advisory committee to support the Director Sector Engagement and Development as co- chair.
- Develop strategies for the project methodology and consultation, which might include but not limited to development of surveys, convening focus groups and individual interviews with key stakeholders.
- Work with internal and external stakeholders to deliver on milestones of the project.
- Provide regular written and verbal reports to Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO regarding project progress and outcomes.
- Provide high quality written reports, presentations and communications on project outcomes within agreed timeframes for review by Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO.
- Work with the Membership and Communications Officer to develop appropriate communications to members about project and policy work.
- Manage all aspects of events related to project work.
- Work with Director Sector Engagement and Development and Business Manager to ensure reporting requirements to funding bodies of projects are met and that projects are delivered on budget.
- Scan the lived experience and mental health sector industry for emerging issues in service changes and policy reform that might impact on the project recommendations.
- Represent QAMH at committees and meetings as agreed with Director Sector Engagement and Development.

LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION

- Work with Director Sector Engagement and Development on timely delivery of project outputs.
- Provide leadership and oversee the work of the employees reporting to the role
- Work with Director Sector Engagement and Development to complete human resource functions including recruitment, onboarding, probation and reviews and other requirements in line with QAMH human resource policies.
- Exercise self-direction as required and proactively manage workload.
- Proactively report work output and achievements.
- Liaise with other members of the QAMH team as required for completion of project work.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Manage project communications to the sector and stakeholders in consultation with QAMH Membership and Communications Officer and the Director Sector Engagement and Development.
- Establish partnerships with relevant industry stakeholders and attend relevant committee meetings and advisory groups.
- Work closely with the Communications Team to plan media in relation to relevant projects, this includes initiating and providing regular communication to promote QAMH through a variety of channels such as the QAMH website, portal and social media.

GENERAL

- Contribute intelligence to business direction and operations of QAMH.
- Provide additional support to QAMH as directed by the Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO.
- Meet obligations under Occupational Health & Safety legislation and escalate matters as appropriate to Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO.
- Uphold the values of QAMH in all work.
- Participate in annual performance appraisals and attend training as identified with Director Sector Engagement and Development.
- Contribute to quality improvement activities as identified with Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO.

Appendix 4. Lived Experience Peer Mentor Position Description

Lived Experience Peer Mentor (0.4FTE)
POSITION DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) is the peak body for the community mental health and wellbeing sector in Queensland. We represent more than 100 organisations and stakeholders involved in the delivery of community mental health services across the state. At a national level, we collaborate with Community Mental Health Australia, and we work alongside our members to build capacity and to advocate on their behalf on issues that impact their operations and people who access their services.

The Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN) is a focused state-wide peak body led by, with and for the Lived Experience workforce within mental health, alcohol and other drugs and suicide prevention. QLEWN is focused on ensuring that the Lived Experience workforce has access to appropriate discipline-specific supervision and support, networking and professional development opportunities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health reforms, promotes and drives community mental wellbeing service delivery for all Queenslanders, through its influence and collaboration with its membership and its strategic partners. QLEWN acts as a united voice for Queensland's Lived Experience government, non-government and private workforces to drive focused Lived Experience led advocacy and system reform.

QAMH has collaborated with QLEWN to identify and deliver several quality improvement initiatives related to Peer Work Training and Qualifications in Queensland.

PURPOSE

This position has been developed to work as part of the team to deliver the project: **Peer Work Student Mentoring Program**.

The project will support students enrolled in the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work at TAFE Queensland (Gold Coast and East Coast (Mooloolaba) Campuses). The project staff will: work with students to identify their individualised support needs; provide individual mentoring support; facilitate group reflective practice and support the identification of appropriate services for placement opportunities. They will also identify emerging issues impacting on students and develop processes, pathways, partnerships, and resources to support the sustainability of the project.

The initiative is a collaboration between QAMH, The Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN), TAFE QLD and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS) on behalf of Workability QLD.

PRIMARY DUTIES

The Lived Experience Peer Mentors will report to the Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator and provide Individual, and group based mentoring support to students enrolled in the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work. They will work closely with the TAFE QLD teachers delivering the course in Mooloolaba and on the Gold Coast to support and enrich the students' learning opportunities through mentoring and support processes, including navigating placement opportunities.

There are two roles available for this project. One will be based on the Gold Coast and one at Mooloolaba. The roles will have the opportunity to co-locate at the TAFE QLD Campus in that area. There will be occasional requirements to travel to the QAMH office (433 Logan Road, Stones Corner), to meet face to face with team and project members. Requirements to travel within the state and/or nationally will be agreed with the Director, Sector Engagement and Development or CEO.

The position will receive Peer Practice Supervision from QLEWN member Brook RED.

PRIMARY ACCOUNTABILITIES

The Lived Experience Peer Mentor will report to the Lived Experience Peer Project Coordinator.

DIRECT REPORTS

There are no direct reports to this position.

CRITICAL EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate will have:

- A firsthand Lived Experience of mental health and/or suicidal distress, including having accessed services and supports and the ability to apply knowledge from this/these experience/s in your work.
- An understanding of and passion for Lived Experience practice and for supporting the professional development of the Lived Experience workforce.
- Experience in and knowledge of the community mental health and wellbeing sector in Queensland and an understanding of the advocacy work of QAMH and QLEWN.
- Experience in and knowledge of the Peer Workforce within the mental health sector.
- Knowledge of the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work qualification, including course content and resources.
- Experience in supporting others using a mentoring/ coaching technique, maintaining a peer scope of practice.
- Highly developed time management, administration, organisational skills with proficiency in MS Office.
- Highly developed interpersonal, communication (written and verbal) and negotiation skills
- Demonstrated ability to work as part of a team and maintain productive working relationships with stakeholders
- Demonstrated ability to work with professionalism and self-awareness while upholding Lived Experience Practice values

DESIRABLE EXPERIENCE

- Experience working with a membership-based organisation.
- Prior experience in identified Lived Experience role

KEY RESULTS AREA

OPERATIONAL

- Work with internal and external stakeholders to deliver on milestones of the project.
- Participate in the Project Advisory Committee and other relevant meetings, as agreed with the Project Coordinator
- Provide regular written and verbal reports to Project Coordinator, Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO regarding project progress.
- Work with the Membership and Communications Officer to develop appropriate communications to members about project work.
- Support the Project Coordinator to manage all aspects of events related to project work.

- Stay up to date with emerging issues in service changes and policy reform that might impact on the project recommendations.

LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION

- Work with Project Coordinator on timely delivery of project outputs.
- Exercise self-direction as required and proactively manage workload.
- Proactively report work output and achievements.
- Liaise with other members of the QAMH team as required for completion of project work.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Support the project coordinator to establish partnerships with relevant industry stakeholders and attend relevant committee meetings and advisory groups.
- Support project communications to the sector and stakeholders in consultation with QAMH Membership and Communications Officer and the Project Coordinator.

GENERAL

- Contribute intelligence to business direction and operations of QAMH.
- Provide additional support to QAMH as directed by the Project Coordinator, Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO.
- Meet obligations under Occupational Health & Safety legislation and escalate matters as appropriate to Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO.
- Uphold the values of QAMH in all work.
- Participate in annual performance appraisals and attend training as identified with Director Sector Engagement and Development.
- Contribute to quality improvement activities as identified with the Project Coordinator Director Sector Engagement and Development and CEO.

Appendix 5. QLEWN Position Statement on the Cert IV in Mental Health Peer Work

QLEWN Position Statement Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work

Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network (QLEWN) is the peak body for the Lived Experience (LE) Workforce throughout Queensland. We acknowledge that currently the only formal vocational qualification for Peer Workers is the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work (MHPW). This qualification and its delivery have been problematic for students, LE workforce, and industry for several years.

Peer work is a collective term for a broad range of roles where either consumer or carer lived experience is an essential requirement. This is often referred to as 'lived experience' work because the phrase 'peer work' is often used to describe peer support work, rather than the broad range of roles that comprise consumer and carer work. LE roles include research, management, policy, supervision, advocacy, and education.

A thriving mental health LE workforce is a vital component of "quality, recovery-focused mental health services". This principle is embedded in the mental health plans and policies that influence all mental health care services in Australia.

This position statement aims to guide good practice for Registered Training Organisation's (RTO's), teachers and industry in the delivery and successful completion of the Certificate IV in MHPW for students.

Student Peer Workers

- Potential students need to recognise that the Certificate IV in MHPW is **not** a recovery pathway, to work on your own recovery and wellbeing. Whilst the content may be cathartic to your own recovery journey, this should not be your intention for studying this course.
- Prior to studying and becoming a LE Peer Worker, you need to do the personal work required to support your own recovery first, ensuring you are in the right place to study and support others. If unsure, consider the Mental Health Peer Skill Set as a first step to study.
- It is your Lived Experience of personal recovery either as a consumer or carer/family member that you will draw on in your work. An ability to reflect and extrapolate your learnings to use in peer work is essential.
- It is essential for consumer and family carer peer work students, to be currently connected with other people doing this type of work as a means of practice development, knowledge, and resource sharing.
- Peer Work requires you to have good information technology (IT) skills and you need to be confident and capable in using them.

RTO's

- We recommend all RTOs create **designated LE roles** for teachers to deliver the Certificate IV in MHPW, in recognition of the unique skill set required and to demonstrate a commitment to growing the Lived Experience (Peer) workforce.
- Good practice is to have a **co-teaching approach**. Two persons with LE should present throughout the entirety of the course - one who identifies as having a consumer perspective and one as a carer/family member perspective.
- It is essential that those teaching the Certificate IV in MHPW have a LE of their own or a family member, a life-changing experience, service use and journey of recovery and healing. It is also essential LE teachers have a connection with the LE movement, have worked or currently work in designated LE roles, and have LE expertise which is grounded in the collective LE research and knowledge base.
- It is essential Students know prior to enrolment that most industry require COVID-19 vaccination certificates, blue cards and national police checks prior to doing placements. Otherwise, this may be a barrier to them completing the course.
- The Certificate IV in MHPW was written in 2014. Since then, the LE (peer) workforce has grown and evolved considerably. Consequently, parts of the teaching and learning materials are no longer contemporary. Advocating to have the course content updated should be a priority.

Industry

1. A workplace must ensure they are doing the necessary organisational readiness required to support a LE workforce (including students and volunteers). This readiness work should include the six pillars of the QLD Framework for the development of the mental health LE Workforce:
    - Organisational commitment
    - Workplace culture
    - Diversity and Inclusion
    - Understanding and defining Lived Experience Roles
    - Human resources and policy practices; and
    - Ongoing development Professional Development a training.
2. A workplace must first employ Peer Workers, before accepting Certificate IV in MHPW student placements.
3. A workplace must also have designated LE workplace supervisors working with students throughout their placements.
4. Important recognition that there are two workforces, the consumer peer workforce, and the family carer peer workforce. There are similarities but also significant differences in the way they work. Good practice is being aware of this when taking and matching students for placement.

If you wish to discuss further the contents of this Position statement, please contact QLEWN via email: projects@qlewn.com.au

Bibliography

National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines
National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines - National Mental Health Commission

Queensland Framework for the Development of the Mental Health Lived Experience Workforce
A blueprint for building the lived experience workforce | Queensland Mental Health Commission (qmhc.qld.gov.au)

The Western Australian Lived Experience (Peer) Workforces Framework
Lived Experience Peer Workforce Project to benefit the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors (mhc.wa.gov.au)

Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry (Nov 2020)
Inquiry report - Mental Health - Productivity Commission (pc.gov.au)

House of Representatives Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Report (Oct 2021)
Mental Health and Suicide Prevention - Final Report – Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au)

Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia report 2013
Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia (unimelb.edu.au),

Social Determinants of Health
Social determinants of health - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)

Useful Links

To enrol to study or get further information on the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work at TAFE QLD Mooloolaba or Southport campus
https://tafeqld.edu.au/course/18/18743/certificate-iv-in-mental-health-peer-work

If you belong to an organisation that employs Peer Workers and would like to enquire about taking students for vocational placement, please contact:

Beverly Charnley
Product Lead TAFE Queensland
E: beverly.charnley@tafeqld.edu.au

If you would like to support QLEWN (Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network) by becoming an individual or organisational member

https://www.qlewn.com.au/membership