



## Lived Experience Advisory Group: Cultural Safety

### Purpose

The purpose of this Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) is for First Nations Persons to advise the MHLEPQ on cultural safety, generally and specifically in the following ways:

- Co-create a MHLEPQ *Cultural Safety in Mental Health Care Position Statement*
- Further advocacy for systemic cultural safety, based on the MHLEPQ's submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into the Mental Health system
- Advise the MHLEPQ operational team on the most appropriate ways for First Nations Persons' voices to be heard in other LEAGs and representative committees
- Advise the MHLEPQ on best practice cultural safety within policies and practices.

### Commitment

The MHLEPQ are committed to organisational practices that are guided by the principle of cultural safety that are recovery-oriented, trauma-informed, and consumer-led. The concept of cultural safety will continue to evolve and be shaped by the interactions between the organisation and its First Nations Persons' LEAG, MHLEPQ members and the broader lived experience community.

We acknowledge the risks of participating in the LEAG and strive for cultural, psychological and organisational safety. We are intentional about relationship-building, inclusivity, support, debriefing, and reflective learning practices with the individuals, communities and organisations we work with.

### Expression of interest

The MHLEPQ are inviting First Nations persons with a lived experience of Queensland mental health services and / or suicidality, who are interested in being appointed as LEAG Members, to advise on cultural safety. This document describes who we are, what the project is, some of the details of the role, and what we offer to participants.

### Background

*[... when ...] reviewing the cultural safety and cultural competence of mainstream services, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and consumers / people with lived experience must be in the driver's seat. Cultural competence and cultural safety must be recognised as subjective experiences that are, ultimately, 'from the eye' of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and consumers / people these services work with<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> Dudgeon et al., 2018. *Indigenous Governance for Suicide Prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities: A guide for Primary Health Networks*. Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, University of Western Australia, p.31.



### ***The MHLEPQ values and commitments***

The Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland (MHLEPQ) is committed to meaningful engagement with people with a lived experience of mental health services, and as appropriate, other members of the community as equal partners in its work. The work with the values of safety, respect, intentional, integrity and outcomes. We commit to<sup>2</sup>:

- interacting in a culturally and psychologically safe way
- working inclusively, compassionately, and patiently
- acknowledging mistakes, apologising and learning from them
- seeing the whole person in any interaction
- courageous curiosity about the strengths, resilience and capabilities of others
- cultivating intentional and meaningful interactions
- co-designing solutions
- working with, not for
- actively looking for the voices we don't hear
- being accountable, transparent, and accessible
- critically analysing our work
- acknowledging the contributions of others
- focusing on whole-of-community change
- being explicit about our intent
- seeking to understand root causes.

### ***Cultural Safety Work***

The MHLEPQ are guided by cultural safety principles for influencing systemic change across the social sector. Evidence shows that 'cultural blindness' has been a major upstream determinant of the inequitable mental health and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations Persons, including, but not limited to the contributing factors of racism, impacts of colonisation and systemic discrimination<sup>3</sup>. Social disadvantage and environmental adversity are continuing stressors for First Nations Peoples today<sup>4</sup>.

To advocate for systemic cultural safety, we must be a culturally safe organisation by modelling the principles we describe. The purpose of this LEAG is to be led by First Nations Persons as we work towards the cultural safety of our organisation and reproducing culturally safe work with staff, members and communities. Our approach echoes the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration*<sup>5</sup> and more recent *National Strategic Framework (2017-2023)*<sup>6</sup> for improving mental health service outcomes for First Nations Peoples:

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<sup>2</sup> MHLEPQ Values Statement 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022 [here](#)

<sup>3</sup> Dudgeon et al., 2018. *Indigenous Governance for Suicide Prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities: A guide for Primary Health Networks*. Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, University of Western Australia

<sup>4</sup> [The gayaa dhuwi proud spirit declaration](#), accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>5</sup> [The gayaa dhuwi proud spirit declaration](#), accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>6</sup> [National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing HERE](#), accessed on 19 September 2022.

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, engagement and partnership in the planning, deliver, evaluation, and measurement of services and programs is critical in fostering greater trust, connectivity, culturally appropriate care and effective outcomes.*

### **Who will be a good fit for this project?**

The MHLEPQ will appoint up to nine First Nations person LEAG Members with a lived experience of Queensland mental health services and / or suicidality. The group will:

- represent First Nations Peoples
- represent a broad range of views within the cultural context of Australian First Nations Peoples, including people from a range of ages, genders, sexualities, abilities, geographical locations, and who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse
- have a commitment to improving the Queensland mental health system
- represent themselves as individuals and community members, not service providers.

This engagement is guided by the work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre who developed a working definition of Indigenous Lived Experience in 2020<sup>7</sup>:

- *A lived experience recognises the effects of ongoing negative historical impacts and or specific events on the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It encompasses the cultural, spiritual, physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of the individual, family or community.*
- *People with lived or living experience of suicide are those who have experienced suicidal thoughts, survived a suicide attempt, cared for someone through a suicidal crisis, been bereaved by suicide or having a loved one who has died by suicide, acknowledging that this experience is significantly different and takes into consideration Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ways of understanding social and emotional wellbeing.*

### **What is being asked of this LEAG?**

First Nations people with relevant lived experience are being invited to inform:

- the development of the MHLEPQs *Cultural Safety in Mental Health Care Position Statement*

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<sup>7</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre, <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-services/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-network/>, accessed on 19 September 2022.

- further advocacy for systemic cultural safety, based on the MHLEPQ's submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into the Mental Health system
- advise the MHLEPQ operational team on the most appropriate ways for First Nations Persons' voices to be heard in other LEAGs and representative committees
- advise the MHELPG on best practice cultural safety within policies and practices.

### ***Duties and Responsibilities***

The LEAG advisory group will be guided by the [LEAG Scope/Charter Statement](#) as they engage with the MHLEPQ staff and stakeholders to:

- participate in discussions, activities, events, and training that relate to the stated objectives of the group, including (but not limited to):
  - finalisation of the MHLEPQ *Cultural Safety in Mental Health Care Position Statement*; and
  - establishment of an enduring LEAG to act as cultural advisors to the peak.
- provide non-binding recommendations and/or key information to the MHLEPQ through the CEO or the Board, where specifically required to do so.

### ***Time/resource expectations***

The LEAG will meet as often as required for the development of the project, which may be as frequently as weekly, but no less than quarterly. Each appointment lasts for a maximum of two years, or where the task is ongoing, for a maximum of four years.

### ***Paid participation policy<sup>8</sup>***

Paid Participation is one of the ways MHLEPQ recognises the valuable, specialised and expert contribution made by people who have a lived/ living experience of mental ill-health. Members will be remunerated through:

- a Paid Participation Payment, based on the structure of the Queensland Mental Health Commission's policy (Appendix 1)
- payment for reasonable travel and accommodation costs
- reimbursement of reasonable associated out of pocket expenses

Time spent traveling to and from, and preparing or reading for and after, Paid Participation activities will be included in the overall hours and will not be separately included in the payment claim.

### ***Reporting***

This group will be required to provide feedback as requested by the Board on MHLEPQ activities relating to the agreed priorities of the Cultural Safety advisory group. The Members of this LEAG will report to the CEO (or nominee) and not to the Board directly.

### ***Location***

A hybrid way of working is generally established, with some face-to-face engagement expected at critical periods of project development. The address of the MHLEPQ office is

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<sup>8</sup> Full policy [here](#)

WOTSO, 84 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley Brisbane. We also have access to Sunshine Coast offices. Travel to external stakeholder venues may occasionally be requested.

### **Our pledge to participants**

#### ***Cultural safety***

The MHLEPQ are committed to organisational practices that are guided by the principle of cultural safety that are recovery-oriented, trauma-informed, and consumer-led. The establishment phase of the organisation has been guided by the company's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Policy*, that states that "Culture can be constructed to relate to more than ethnicity alone. Culture can include a person's socio-economic status or background, region, race, religion, gender, age, sexuality and / or (dis)ability"<sup>9</sup>.

One previous LEAG found that cultural blindness is a major issue in mental health services and recommended a pivot toward a system that meets the cultural, social and safety needs of the people who use it<sup>10</sup>. The concept of cultural safety will continue to evolve and be shaped by the interactions between the organisation and its First Nations Persons' LEAG, MHLEPQ members and the broader lived experience community.

#### ***Our awareness of the risks of participation***

The main objective for our system advocacy body is one of cultural, psychological and organisational safety, underpinned by recovery-oriented, trauma-informed and culturally safe approaches. The MHLEPQ are intentional about caring for the wellbeing of all individuals and organisations they interact with. We acknowledge the potential for distress for people with lived experience of system-related harm within mental health services, including the possibility for traumatisation and re-traumatisation of people working with the MHLEPQ.

#### ***Relationship building***

We commit to develop and sustain a respectful organisational culture. We will seek to understand first, then be heard, as we develop collaborative relationships with the LEAG Members. The LEAG Members will be supported to build trust and rapport in several ways, including:

- opportunity at each meeting to get to know their peers in a relaxed way that creates safe and inclusive space, and an environment of participation
- information about safe storytelling and meeting practices
- discussions with individuals about their emotional readiness for personal story sharing and encouragement of "personal safety plans"
- a buddy system for communication about their wellbeing.

We support in all ways possible the individual, family and community networks that each Member is embedded in, and support grassroots activities that create community self-determination.

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<sup>9</sup> [Operations Manual, Appendix 17, page 77](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland Submission 133 to the Mental Health Select Committee](#)

### ***Inclusivity statement***

The MHLEPQ are guided by their *Diversity & Inclusion Policy* that supports diversity along many dimensions. The policy states that “Our diversity encompasses differences in ethnicity, gender, language, age, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, thinking styles, experience, and education”.<sup>11</sup> We are committed to tackling cultural stereotypes both within and outside our organisation, treating all people with respect and dignity, and benefitting consumer members through our diversity practices.

### ***Support and debriefing***

The Members will be provided mentor and administrative support arranged by MHLEPQ engagement leads and policy staff. Approaches to individual and group debriefing will be decided in collaboration with the members, with a range of internal and external options available.

### ***Reflective learning***

The MHLEPQ commit to reflecting on the LEAG project journey by documenting the feedback, experiences and recommendations of the Members during, and at the completion of their work. We will evaluate and share the views from the codesign debrief process and take new learnings forward in our work.

### ***Approaching Conflict***

Tensions naturally arise due to differences of opinion and are welcomed as an expected part of the co-creative process. We believe that it is possible to build constructive change out of conflict with open and respectful communication, and this is often sufficient to support positive outcomes. Formal dispute resolution processes are outlined in the MHLEPQ *Constitution* and detailed more in the *Company Operations Manual*. These documents are available to LEAG Members, as well as a designated person to discuss conflict with in the first instance.

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<sup>11</sup> [Operations Manual, Appendix 18, page 81](#)



**Appendix 1: Remuneration Procedures for Part-time Chairs and Members of Queensland Government Bodies – Regulation, Administration and Advice Category level 3**

Length of activity	Chair	General participation
Daily <small>(more than 4 hours with a maximum of 7.25 hours)</small>	\$390	\$300
Half a day <small>(more than 2 hour with a maximum of 4 hours)</small>	\$195	\$150
≤ 2 hours <small>(minimum payment)</small>	NA	\$75