



Member MeetUp, Communique

20 September 2023

A member meeting was held on 20 September 2023. This was the third official member meeting of the MHLEPQ held at our offices at Shop 4, 67 Astor Terrace, Spring Hill, with the addition of one Regional Member Meeting, held in Toowoomba on 25 July 2023. The September meeting was also open for Members to join using Microsoft Teams. The members heard an overview of current activities open for involvement, significantly Mental Health Week activities and invitation for feedback on the draft MHLEPQ Peak position paper regarding the establishment of a national mental health consumers peak, and draft MHLEPQ Strategic Plan. The meeting also included an overview of the MHLEPQ background and our core functions for the purpose of informing new members.

MHLEPQ currently has 202 Members which is an increase from 151 members from the last member meeting. Members had a broad and free flowing discussion, first introducing themselves to the wider group and areas of particular interest to them.

- **Bring Back PHaMs** - Members discussed the current National Mental Health Consumer 'Bring Back PHaMs' campaign. It was highlighted that as the NDIS was established the PHaMs program ceased having particular impact on those consumers without NDIS packages. This meant that many Queenslanders could no longer access supports once available to them through PHaMs. Members were concerned about the decrease in availability of community care, and community-led mental health responses.

A strength of the PHaMs model was the 'self-referral' system in the model. Members also discussed inconsistencies in care based on the service delivery perspective of the service providers.

The focus in any revamped PHaMs program or any subsequent program based on the PHaMs model is the need to change from providing siloed

“models of care” towards “systems of care” where the types of support provided through the PHaMs programs was integrated into all service and support delivery.

The Members resolved to establish a committee to develop a MHLEPQ response to and participation in the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance “Bring back PHaMs” campaign. This committee will report to future member meetings.

- **The role of the MHLEPQ** – Members spoke about the ‘role of the MHLEPQ’. The discussion defined the peak’s role to facilitate lived experience advocacy by creating spaces and discussing issues together, and to support people to represent the collective to decision makers and the wider community. They noted a need for the focus to always remain on members, and connecting peers together, and growing skills and strength to advance the collective agenda.
- **Challenges in Lived Experience Advocacy** – The group highlighted current challenges experienced in the lived experience advocacy space. One challenge is lived experience advice being ‘watering down’ to suit a preferred narrative or alternate lived experience stories amplified or promoted if they are less complex and more palatable to others. This leads to outcomes not accurately reflecting the actual experiences shared.. Finally lived experience expertise engagement processes are often structured in a way that creates a biased towards those who are more privileged, literate and educated.
- **The Function of the MHLEPQ** – Members discussed the functions and purpose of the peak and how to achieve the best conditions for a collective voice for consumers. Actions for the peak to support the amplification of members' advocacy agenda will include:
 - Publishing position papers, representing the collective position of members on certain issues or topics.
 - Regular communication to government of issues identified by members.
 - Establishment of an evidence base and advocacy strategy

At an operational level members identified functions and modalities that could support MHLEPQ work, including:

- Online discussion/ chat functions. The staff noted this has been identified and work is underway to create a platform for member interaction.
- The establishment of sub-committee groups or working groups for areas of interest. The peak is currently in the process of establishing a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Interest Group and will establish a committee regarding the PHaMs campaign.

Other issues raised at the meeting included using personal narratives as the evidence for systems advocacy. The Peak will explore mechanisms to hear member stories to identify areas for advocacy. The group also raised the 'referral' loop when trying to find support or care, and the interconnectedness of living with mental ill health and/or suicidality and disability.

The next meeting is planned for the MHLEPQ AGM on 12th December, 2023 at 5 pm Qld time - MHLEPQ Office - Shop 4/67 Astor Terrace, Spring Hill or by Teams.