

WELCOME

Welcome to this new format of the **MHLEPQ e-newsletter!** Although we're still a relatively new organisation, we hope to be on a path of continual improvement where we tweak things over time.

We employed our first engagement leads and policy director, exactly two years ago. The MHLEPQ began with **5 members**, a year later we had **144** and now, we have **over 400 members** (425 to be exact).

We went from no social media presence, forms, meet ups or ways for us to directly interact with members. Now we're on **Facebook, LinkedIn** and **YouTube**, with so many events, forums, meet ups and **incredibly inspiring members part of MHLEPQ.**

Over the past year the MHLEPQ members have advised **more than 65 different projects** in various ways, on committees, at meetings, through surveys – all these different ways to engage and ensure that consumer voices are heard and noticed!

We have also produced **two major reports**, including the **Shining a Light Report**, on coercive practices and the **Psychosocial Hazards Experience by Peer Workers in Queensland.**

With a **number of significant submissions** including the use of restrictive practices in Queensland Health, supported housing, changes to the Mental Health Act on access and equity for consumers on treatment authorities. Then into the review of Queensland Human Rights Act, it has been a massive year.



welcome

Rahim Mohammadi

has taken up the role as Engagement Lead with the MHLEPQ! Rahim works from Monday to Wednesday.

Rahim has been working in a number of community support and development roles in the last couple years. He's been engaged in Multicultural Australia as a bi-cultural support worker. We're glad to have him aboard!

Emily Fernandez
(they/them) has taken up the position as full-time Administration Officer with MHLEPQ!

Apart from well-developed administrative skills Emily also brings experience from retail, to catering and as a music publicist. They bring additional journalistic, social media and public relations skills to The Peak!

Kayla (Tzu-Ying) Lu is MHLEPQ's second intern!

Kayla has lived in Australia for the last two years and comes to us with a dedicated desire to make a positive impact in the field of mental healthcare through public health policy.

With a Master of Public Health and Master of Epidemiology, graduating from both the University of Newcastle and UQ with strong skills in Health Promotion.

She's interested in the 'big picture' view of the social determinants of mental health and wellbeing and is excited to develop advocacy policy skills for system reform.

This time last year we produced a position statement into the **establishment of a National Consumers Peak**. We argued that this national peak should build on the voices of consumers through our respective State and Territory Peaks. Only a few weeks ago the **National Mental Health Consumer Alliance was funded \$3.7 million** to be this voice for consumers through the State and Territory peaks.

The foundation for this **growth and impact has entirely been our membership**. Members participating in lived experience advisory groups and special interest group meetings, members being an active part of member meetings and other activities. It is through the collective stories of members, we get the power to influence and affect change in the mental health system.

As we start our third year of being a fully functional consumer peak, it is more important than ever to ensure that we speak on behalf of a strong and broad member base. It is through our collectivism our voices are heard! Make sure that every conversation you have with a potential member of the MHLEPQ includes the question **"but are you a member of the MHLEPQ?"**.

From all of us at MHLEPQ, thank you!



She also has experience as a registered nurse and spent five years in the role back in her country of Taiwan.

To our delight, Kayla has jumped into a series of Human Rights events over the last week and enjoyed meeting our staff and some of our members.

She has begun interning two days per week supporting Bec to design a Human Rights advocacy toolkit that will be developed with our community over the next few months.

A lot is happening in the Human Rights space for The Peak and the sector right now, and Kayla has rolled up her sleeves to contribute her most to the work!

FAREWELL TO CLARE & TIM

Engagement Lead Tim Johnston has recently left the MHLEPQ after being part of the initial staff intake, just over two years ago.

Tim has been an important part of setting the MHELPO engagement model and roles up. He was primarily responsible for stakeholder engagement and was in a unique role of being a shared staff member between MHLEPQ and ARAFMI. Now Tim has moved into a full-time role within ARAFMI. So, we'll be seeing him around still!

Clare Trotter joined the MHLEPQ just over a year ago as our first admin support worker. Clare has since then worked tirelessly to systemise our administration support processes. For many members, Clare would be the first point of contact within the MHLEPQ. She has been offered an opportunity to further develop her career in her field of interest and looks forward to joining the MHLEPQ as a member!

A message from Clare

"My tenure with MHLEPQ in a professional capacity has reached its conclusion. Serving alongside this dedicated team has been a privilege and a profoundly enriching experience. The insights gained and the meaningful connections formed during my time here have significantly deepened my understanding of lived experience advocacy and its importance.

As I embark on the next phase of my career in advertising and marketing, I am excited to share that the confidence and insights gained from my experience at MHLEPQ have played a pivotal role in guiding this decision. I am sincerely grateful for the encouragement and support I received, which have empowered me to pursue a new career path.

I am confident that MHLEPQ is in capable hands with Emily (also a fellow cat enthusiast!) assuming my responsibilities, ensuring a seamless continuation of our important work. I am thankful for the invaluable experience and the opportunity to contribute to such a meaningful organisation.

Thank you once again for your support during my time here. I eagerly anticipate staying connected and being a part of MHLEPQ as a member moving forward."





Elimination of Seclusion and Restraint

We are continuing our **advocacy around the elimination of seclusion and restraint** using the MHLEPQ position statement. We have **raised the issue directly with the MHAOD branch** and asked for a meeting with them specifically to discuss the implementation of the position statement.

Psychosocial Hazards Project

The report on the psychosocial hazards project has been completed and **access to the webinar can be found on the MHLEPQ YouTube channel**. The following position statement is still in development. We will suggest that Queensland Health and the **Queensland Alliance for Mental Health partner with QLEWN, MHLEPQ, and ARAFMI** to develop guidelines for psychosocial work health safety for peer workers.

CURRENT ADVOCACY PROJECTS

Members and staff of MHLEPQ have been busy! Here are some of our current projects.

Advocacy Campaign

Members were informed about the project with **Mettlesome** to develop a joint promotion campaign for lived experience advocacy in Queensland. The overall theme of the campaign is **"Together We Stand"** and the execution of it will take the form of letters of solidarity – not dissimilar to what we did when we sent Christmas cards to inpatient wards. We've planned a **joint landing website** that will **refer carers to ARAFMI and consumers to MHLEPQ**. The action is to send a message to a Carer or a Consumer you know to connect them to their community in ARAFMI and MHLEPQ.

Chief Psychiatrist Policy Project

MHLEPQ gathered a **special interest group** to provide strategic oversight for the Chief Psychiatrist **review of all policies under the Mental Health Act**, which is now established.

The first group of policies to be reviewed are the Classification of Patients, Seclusion and Restraint and Use of ECT. The special interest group is led by members **Melissa Pietzner** and **Christos Papadopoulos**. We are pushing for adequate recognition for the objective of eliminating seclusion and restraint in the policies.

Shining a Light: Eliminating Coercive Practices in Queensland Mental Health Services

Shining a Light is gaining traction as a reference document. To help socialise it, we are working on developing a set of presentations to bring it to new audiences.

We have worked with **members and stakeholder allies on a 'documentary storytelling' video project** to bring forward the lived experiences of people subjected to coercive practices, as well as some of our findings from **Shining a Light**.

Various length videos will form part of an **advocacy toolkit** that members, peer workers, and mental health staff may use in their communications to **educate on the impacts of coercive practices in mental healthcare**.

Final edits are being completed and we're looking forward to releasing the video publicly!

Human Rights

The peak's policy work has taken on a decidedly Human Rights flavour over the last few months. Which should be no surprise to anyone given that our constitutional objects include "providing policy advice and system advocacy for, and with, Consumers of all ages of the Queensland mental health system, in particular those who are marginalised and disadvantaged, based on the principles of equity, access, cultural-safety, recovery, and human rights". This topic is one of the 'big boulders' of our business (as our CEO likes to say) and it feels good to be focusing so strongly on its importance.

Advocacy Competencies

The MHLEPQ engaged Simon Katterl Consulting to identify key advocacy competencies required for consumer advocacy in Queensland. We will look at existing standards, what training is currently available to meet these competencies, and development of training where this does not already exist

Simon is a Queenslanders currently living in Melbourne but with a wealth of knowledge about advocacy and human rights. We have been working with Simon over the last few weeks to develop this and will be announcing news soon!



QLD Trauma Policy

The **Queensland Mental Health Commission** is leading the development of a **Whole-of-Government Queensland Trauma Strategy**.

The MHLEPQ provided a submission calling for a public health approach to trauma seeking firstly, to prevent events that can generate trauma reactions; to intervene and limit the impact of such events where they cannot be prevented; and to ensure agencies are trauma-informed when dealing with individuals who have experienced adverse trauma reactions to past events.

MHLEPQ invited Members to express interest in being part of ongoing work in this space. Two (2) focus groups were held, and we have **developed a report of the consultation findings** that has been submitted to the **QMHC** for the development of the strategy.

We will be publishing this report, and a member group is planned to continue our work in this space - **please let us know if you would like to be part of it.**

Development of a Human Rights Advocacy Toolkit

New intern Kayla and Bec have made a start on this important project, by looking across the mental health sector for information about human rights policy frameworks.

In early July, Simon Katterl guided staff and some members through the parts of the Queensland Human Rights Act that are most relevant to public mental health entities and we have started bringing together that information in the form of a toolkit. We hope that people will be able to apply the tools to analyse specific relevant human rights in mental healthcare, governance, policy and practice. We learnt how to “forecast, assess and decide” whether human rights are being properly considered, and whether there is documented evidence of government obligations to comply with human rights. All this to put **power back in the hands of the people!**

Our Submission to the QLD Human Rights Act 2019 Review

Professor Susan Harris Rimmer was appointed to provide a report by late September on the first review of our state’s Human Rights Act since it began five years ago. The MHLEPQ has made a submission to that process based on the findings from multiple member consultations and in partnership with Victoria’s Simon Katterl.

Staff were invited to a meeting with Prof. Rimmer and the perspectives shared by our members in the late July meeting were an integral part of this review. The MHLEPQ Human Rights survey report is in its final edit phase and about to go to Natasha for full publication.

We published the draft on our website for consultation and have received incredible feedback from our community hivemind! I appreciate everyone who takes the time to share their wisdom and hope you all know how much it strengthens our collective

The Rise of Involuntary Treatment in QLD Project with Griffith University

A group of Members met and discussed Lived Experience engagement for a research project with Griffith University. The discussion will form the framework for the project’s ethics application. Following the approval, Members will be invited to be part of the research activities exploring the rise of involuntary treatment in QLD.



Better Care Together Evaluation Framework

MHLEPQ has been part of a **series of workshops** with **Queensland Health and Nous Group** to inform the **development of an Evaluation Framework for Better Care Together**.

Throughout this process we have advocated strongly that Better Care Together must be evaluated against its founding principles and approaches including upholding human rights, person-centred care, harm minimisation and least restrictive practices, co-design, collaboration and good governance. We have argued that the outcomes of Better Care Together based on these principles must be evaluated from a consumer perspective.

Lived Experience Group – Digital Strategy Queensland Health

Queensland Health is planning to establish a Lived Experience Group to inform the Digital Strategy – we will share more information, once received.

Mental health and Wellbeing Strategy

Members met with Health and Wellbeing Queensland to give feedback on the Draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. **Jordan Frith** also represented key issues discussed as part of the Psychosocial Supports Group.

Collection of Narrative Contributions

At a previous Member meeting, **members spoke about the importance of narrative in the lived experience advocacy space** and following this, a member connected with the MHLEPQ to discuss leading some work to **establish a collection of personal narratives from Members**.

On behalf of the Member, Eloise presented this concept to the group, and invited those interested in this work to reach out to further discuss the next steps.

The group has been established and has developed a project proposal for Mental Health Week that they will lead.

Members who would like to be involved with establishing our shared narrative project should let us know, including being part of a podcast.

Establishing a Casual Weekend Member Meet

Our Member **Jordan** has suggested establishing a **Member Meet held monthly on a weekend** with the purpose of **networking** and **connecting** in a freer flowing environment.

This is a consistent request from our Member **David** who suggests that we **meet** and **do art in public spaces on a Saturday or Sunday**.

We will be working with these ideas to bring them together if possible.

Please let us know if this would be of interest to you.

Regional Representation

We are working on ways to ensure better regional representation within the MHLEPQ.

We are currently attempting to **establish a number of regional MHLEPQ committees** within individual Hospital and Health Service Districts.

On the 12th of June we took a proposal to create a Cairns Regional Committee. The MHLEPQ will support this work through **a local paid coordination role** to support the committee and through ongoing administrative and advocacy support.

It is intended that the local committees become the go-to for regional consultation and co-design work as well as an empowered regional voice in MHLEPQ state-wide advocacy. Once we have established regional committees in several HHS areas, we will coordinate these groups through a MHLEPQ regional policy council!

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



LGBTQIA+

Member **Brody Hayes** is leading the **new MHLEPQ LGBTQIA+ special interest group**.

LGBTQIA+ communities collectively face unique challenges within many aspects of accessing healthcare or even basic community support.

Individuals within these communities face many different forms of discrimination and prejudice/stigma due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and the many intersectionality's that form their overall state of wellbeing. Rates of mental illness and related issues within LGBTQIA+ communities are significantly higher, and the overall lack of appropriate & safe support creates many barriers for our community.

The conversations surrounding the LGBTQIA+ communities have reached a terrifying level, if we don't start our own conversations and speak up, the consequences have the potential to become even more severe.

NEW PEAK BODIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARERS & CONSUMERS



On Tuesday, July 2nd 2024 the **Assistant Minister for Mental Health Emma McBride** announced the establishment of two new peak bodies for mental health carers and consumers. The funding for these two peaks was provided to **Mental Health Carers Australia** and the **National Mental Health Consumers Alliance**.

This was a great outcome for mental health consumers in Queensland and followed intense advocacy by the MHLEPQ and others to ensure the structure of the new peaks was right.

Activists in the consumer space have long advocated for these peaks, as funding for them have been announced and withdrawn in the past. So, it was with some nervousness we waited between the announcement of the intent to fund the two peaks in early 2023 to the actual funding of the peaks being announced!

Members of the MHLEPQ may recall the position statement of the MHLEPQ on the establishment of a new National Consumer Peak issued in October 2023. In this position statement we warned against the risk of fracturing the consumer voice across Australia if the National Consumer Peak was set up in contrast and competition with existing State and Territory peaks.

Within this group, we aim at coming together as a collective to explore how LGBTQIA+ lived experience can inform appropriate mental health care reform and competent services.

Aiming to increase our visibility and representation, create a more informed general understanding of our experiences. Within this we plan on using our personal narratives for much needed education and steer the change of building a safe & accepting voice to advocate on policies and reform.

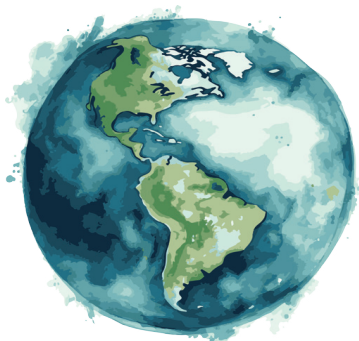
Through all of this we aim to create a community of peer's that can work collectively & collaboratively to build an overall sense of belonging and acceptance.

We highlighted that mental health consumers are not either State or Commonwealth consumers – we are just people and the distinction between jurisdiction is artificial. We were concerned that a competitive model would mean replication of functions which in the longer run will waste resources.

The MHLEPQ was part of forming the **National Mental Health Consumer Alliance** as a partnership between **VMIAC** (Victoria), **Being** (NSW), **CoMHWA** (WA), **LELAN** (SA), **MHLET** (Tas) and **ACT MHCN** combined representing more than **8,000 consumers** and more than **130 years collective experience** in lived experience advocacy.

The **National Mental Health Consumer Alliance** has now been funded to transition into the role of **National Peak**. This will be done in an integrated way, so the national peak becomes a natural extension of the State and Territory peaks, and the State and Territory peaks becomes the natural local engagement for the National peak. **The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance** will soon recruit a permanent CEO to lead the transition and will also appoint an interim chair.

There will be consultation as we develop the final governance structure of the national peak followed by the appointment of the full Board and permanent Chair. We expect that the **National Peak** will have a coordinating role in policy and national advocacy but also that local engagement will be achieved by embedding national local positions into each of the State and Territory peak.



CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD)

MHLEPQ has established a Culturally & Linguistically Diverse special interest group. This group discusses the barriers and experiences of individuals from CALD communities and will utilise our members' lived experience to inform and improve mental health service provision and cultural responsiveness.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORTS

Psychosocial supports are vital for promoting well-being and resilience in individuals and communities. This group advocates for holistic community supports, removing barriers to accessing mental health care, finding new points of access, the importance of peer work services in the community and exploring effective models for supporting marginalised groups.

There is still availability to join these group so if you would like to be involved please let us know!



CONTACT US

We would love to hear from you and welcome your involvement.

Please head to our website to see how you can get involved!

✉ engagement@mhlepq.org.au

🌐 www.mhlepq.org.au

Or find us online!



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NH Design

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