

WELCOME!

September 2024
Newsletter

We hope this edition of the MHLEPQ Newsletter finds you contented.

Our newsletters highlight activities on our agenda and that our community have been part of over August and September!

Here's what you'll find in this edition:

- MHLEPQ AGM Board Nominations
- MHLEPQ Updates and Celebrations
- MHLEPQ Opportunities and Events
- Lived Experience Engagement Requests - External
- Member MeetUp! - August Update
- Member Forums
 - August - IPRA Discussion with State Coordinator Scott James
 - September - Queensland Human Rights Commission with Commissioner Scott McDougall
- Special Interest Group Updates
 - LGBTQIA+ Special Interest Group
 - Psychosocial Special Interest Group
- Engagement Update
- Policy Update
- MHLEPQ News

Until next time,
The MHLEPQ Team



Annual General Meeting Nominations

Nominations for the MHLEPQ Board are now open.

The AGM will be held on Wednesday, December 11th from 5:00PM to 7:00PM.

Nominations can only be done through this [portal linked here](#) and cannot be sent to the MHLEPQ office directly.

Two (2) Board members will be stepping down, being Will Stubb-Smith (Co-chair) and Peter Forday. Both Board members intend to renominate.

Please see the [nominations portal](#) for more information or email engagement@mhlepq.org.au for further enquiries.

Get Involved in Your Peak!

Check out what MHLEPQ is up to
and join in



MHLEPQ Opportunities and Upcoming Events:

- MHLEPQ Joint Development Position on the Wolston Park Investigation
- EOI: Focus Groups - Inquiry into Truth and Justice Commission Bill 2024
- October Member Forum - Mental Health Review Tribunal
- MHLEPQ and ECCQ CALD Special Interest Group
- Creative Narrative Sharing Project
- LGBTQIA+ Special Interest Group
- Request to Join the [MHLEPQ Members \(only\) Facebook Group here](#)

To find out more and how to be involved go to our [website here](#).

Get involved with Your Peak or email engagement@mhlepq.org.au



Lived Experience Engagement Requests

Get involved in projects that are happening across QLD

External Lived Experience Engagement Requests:

Queensland Mental Health Week

- FECCA Conference 2024 - Registrations Open
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Survey on Lived & Living Experience
- National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People
- QDN: Seeking people with disability & family participants - Consultation on Qld Restrictive Practices Bill
- EOI – Paid opportunity to participate as Lived Experience Experts on a procurement Evaluation Panel
- Queensland Mental Health Commission's charter for partnering with people with lived-living experience
- Identifying Reasons Behind Increased Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment in Queensland

To find out more and be involved go to our [website here](#).

External LE Engagement Requests or email engagement@mhlepq.org.au





MHLEPQ Celebrates Two Years!

We recently celebrated a significant milestone for Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland (MHLEPQ), marking three years since our establishment and two years since we hired our first employees. The occasion was commemorated with a dinner, bringing together staff, past and present, to reflect on the achievements and challenges we've faced along the way. We were especially honoured to have the great person who originally formed the Peak join us – Zoe Cunningham.

MHLEPQ's journey began with Zoe's vision and determination, which laid the groundwork for the organisation we've become today. Her unwavering commitment to amplifying the voices of those with lived experience was the driving force behind our formation. From those humble beginnings, MHLEPQ has grown into a vital advocacy body for the mental health community in Queensland.

Over the past three years, MHLEPQ has proudly stood as a voice for lived experience, creating meaningful opportunities for individuals to share their stories and contribute to systemic change. From hosting member forums, leading critical discussions, and advocating for the rights and dignity of mental health consumers, we have built a community rooted in empathy, inclusion, and action.

This celebration reminded us of the collective effort and dedication that continue to drive us forward. None of this would have been possible without our members. Your courage, resilience, and willingness to share your experiences has and continues to shape everything we've accomplished and are working towards. To each of you, we extend our deepest gratitude—thank you for your ongoing support, trust, and belief in MHLEPQ's vision.

As we continue our work, we remain committed to the values and vision that have guided us through these past three years—amplifying lived experiences, challenging outdated structures, and ensuring that the voices of those with lived experience are heard and valued throughout the mental health system.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this recent celebration and who has contributed to our journey thus far. Here's to many more years of growth, collaboration, and continued advocacy for a more inclusive and rights-based mental health system in Queensland.





Implementing Human Rights in the Queensland Mental Health System

Bec: Kayla's 3-month internship has finished and we miss her wonderful presence already! She has been busy moving forward our understanding of the policy landscape of human rights in Queensland, exploring the "implementation gap" in human rights – or in other words, the difference between what is "said" in policy and what is "done" in practice.

We know there is strong evidence for the "whys" and "whats" of human rights frameworks in healthcare. Public entities including Queensland Health are bound by the Human Rights Act (HRA)(2019) and the Mental Health Act (2016) clearly describes the importance of safeguarding 'patient rights'. We found that Queensland Health has a suite of policies and guidelines that further describe consumer rights and other ways to support people receiving care, for example, by Individual Patient Rights Advisors and Advanced Health Directives.

We hear from too many people about the ongoing harm caused by breaches of their rights, and the systemic issues that compromise people's dignity, autonomy and ability to make supported decisions about how they wish to live their lives. We describe more about the 'implementation gap' in our report which will be available for your comment soon. Watch this space!

Kayla: I am very grateful to MHLEPQ for having me during this time. I have gained so much knowledge about mental health promotion in this respectful, inclusive, and friendly place. Under Bec's leadership, I have actively participated in a desktop review and writing policy recommendations for the next discussion paper.

In this project, we focused on 'Implementing' human rights. Although legal frameworks and toolkits are in place, voices still express that human rights are being violated. This indicates a gap between policy and implementation, which is the key focus of our project.

MHLEPQ is a powerful organisation advocating for mental health, driven by lived-experience advocates who seek to create real systemic change. I'm honoured to intern and grow here. Please stay tuned for our upcoming work!

From all of us MHLEPQ, good luck Kayla and check out the incredible carpet she made for the office!



August Member MeetUp!

At our August Member MeetUp brought forward some powerful discussions.

We covered important topics such as truth-telling, psychosocial strategies, updates from our special interest groups and upcoming events.

Thank you to all the MHLEPQ members who joined us, both in person and online.

We look forward to continuing these discussions at the next meetup and to share in another hearty meal.

Our next Member MeetUp is on **Wednesday, October 30th** from 5:00PM to 7:00PM - let us know if we'll see you there via [the form here](#).





August Member Forum - Independent Patient Rights Advisors with State Coordinator Scott James

We had **Scott James, the State Coordinator of the Independent Patient Rights Advisors**, join us for our Member Forum. We discussed the functions of IPRA and approaches to protecting, claiming, and maintaining your rights as a consumer in the system.

Thanks to Scott for having real conversations with our members about these contentious issues.

If you missed out on being able to attend this member forum no worries, we'll have the video up on our [YouTube Channel](#) soon!



September Member Forum - Queensland Human Rights Commission with Commissioner Scott McDougall

We hosted our third Member Forum in September with **Scott McDougall, Commissioner of the Queensland Human Rights Commission**.

The forum focused on meaningful discussions around human rights, mental health advocacy and lived experience. Our members shared valuable insights on how the Commission can improve in ensuring human rights protections within our community, emphasizing the critical importance of lived experience in shaping mental health reforms and practically engaging in the community.

A big thank you to all the members who attended and contributed to the conversation.

Our next Member Forum is with the **Mental Health Review Tribunal - October 16th, 5:00PM to 6:30PM** - [RSVP here](#).



Change Makers in Action

Spotlight on the incredible advocacy and activism contributions of Members.

Enjoy exploring and witnessing change in action!

LGBTQIA+ Special Interest Group



The LGBTQIA+ Special Interest Group attended the Brisbane Pride Fair Day!

They spent the day connecting with the community and handing out mini MHLEPQ information bags filled with:

- Helpful resources about what we do
- Colouring in pages and stickers
- Fun treats, and more
- It was a day celebrating pride, diversity, and raising awareness about the important work we do (and of course, we had to grab some snacks)

Check out all the fun below!

Interested in joining the LGBTQIA+ Special Interest Group? Let us know via [the form here](#).

Meetings are held once a month every **Thursday from 5:00pm to 6:30pm**, join us in-person or online!



MHLEPQ's member and Psychosocial Support Lived Experience Group Lead, Jordan and CEO Jorgen met with the Minister for Mental Health Shannon Fentiman MP at the opening of Arafmi's Carers Hubb.

The Minister announced \$9M to be distributed as grants of up to \$150,000 each for community based mental health activities.

Find out more about these grants [here](#).

The Psychosocial LE Support Group also worked towards writing a statement with the help of other members, discussing how the recent changes to the NDIS Bill has brought outrage to the disability community.

You can read Jordan's impressive [words here](#) and read and share the groups [full statement here](#).

Nothing About Us Without Us

"I fear that many lives will be lost due to lack of support,"

- MHLEPQ Member

Follow the link [here](#) to read MHLEPQ's Statement: **'Getting the NDIS Back on Track No.1' Bill - Statement on the National Disability Insurance Scheme**



Engagement Update



Hello Friends,

This time of year, we see our calendars quickly fill with activities and events particularly throughout **Queensland Mental Health Week 5 – 13 October**.

We will be out and about across a number of events, including:

- [Recovered Futures Art Exhibition launch day Friday, October 4, 5:00PM - 6:00PM](#)
- [Walk for Awareness, Sunday October 6th](#)
- [Thrive by the Bay Community Day, Tuesday October 8th](#)
- [Talk it out: Workshop Building Connections for Better Mental Health, Wednesday, October 9th](#)
- [Mental Health Workforce Hub Launch, Wednesday, October 9th, 2:00PM - 4:00PM](#)
- [Ipswich Mental Health and wellbeing expo, Thursday October 10th](#)
- [Out from the Mist Awards Evening, Thursday October 10th](#)
- [ARTBEAT: Music and Arts Festival, Friday October 11th](#)
- [Mental Health Week Awards, Friday October 11th](#)
- [Logan Loud and Pride Community Day, Saturday October 12th](#)

If you're free or planning to be at one of these events, let's catch up! Let me know by dropping me a line at elloisew@mhlepq.org.au.

If you are attending or hosting an event across the week, feel welcome to share information about the Peak and our community. We have a ton of flyers and promotional material that we can arrange get to you share with your wider communities.

Spending time with our community, are the important moments that cement what all this is for, whether that's at an event, catching up for a bite to eat, phone /virtual chat, or visiting friends receiving in-patient treatment is the important moments that cement what all this for all of us – who all deserve better.

With a calendar stacked of activities and events over the next month, I hope to see many familiar faces, and meet some new ones to welcome to our community.

Until next time,

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Policy Update

(Cth) Truth and Justice Commission Inquiry



First Nations members worked on a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

First Nations MHLEPQ members worked with Bec on a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs which closed on Friday, 20th September. The Committee invited submissions on the establishment of a Commission to inquire into historic and ongoing injustices against Australian First Nations peoples, including the enduring impacts on their social and emotional wellbeing.

Members drew on their lived experience, knowledge, expertise and connections to Community to provide recommendations about establishing a strong foundation in the set-up phase of the Inquiry. They also advised with overarching principles, broad system perspectives, and specific recommendations about engagement, representation, and First Nations' entitlements, to be implemented for the duration of the Commission:

“ I wonder what it would look like if we supported them [young First Nations people] to be able to go back home into Community and like actually cared about that connection to Country and Community in a way that was meaningful ”

Members described the risk to First Nations communities if Truth-telling processes weren't conducted in partnership with the people who were most impacted:

“ What if we tell our stories and no one believes us? What if we tell our story and it makes things worse? Why are we telling our story? Is it for us? Is it for someone else? Will there be an outcome if we tell our story? Or will it disadvantage us in some way? ”

And participants detailed how important community-led partnerships, cultural safety, human rights, community-authorized representation and mutual respect for cultural identity and diversity were for a successful Commission.

“ With everything you do, ask yourself how is it looking after and helping Country? ”

Read the full [MHLEPQ submission here](#).

Read all submissions to the [Truth and Justice Commission Inquiry here](#).



Exposing Buried Truths



The Minister for Health Shannon Fentiman Announces Investigation into Historical Abuse Allegations at Wolston Park Mental Hospital

On August 8th, Minister for Mental Health Shannon Fentiman directed the Queensland Mental Health Commission to undertake an investigation regarding the services provided at Wolston Park Mental Hospital between the 1950s and the 1990s. The investigation is limited to historic allegations only. The Mental Health Lived Experience Peak (MHLEPQ) argues that the Commissioner should also make recommendations that could lead to improvements in the current system, where relevant. We are particularly concerned about the similarities in how patients at Wolston Park and today's service users feel silenced when complaining about conduct within the system.

For members who have firsthand experience of Wolston Park Mental Hospital and for those who feel traumatized by institutionalization in general, the investigation process can be re-traumatizing and isolating. Any members who feel this investigation is relevant to their experiences are invited to contact the MHLEPQ to collaborate on developing the organisation's position regarding the investigation and to provide each other with peer support throughout the process.

This invitation stands whether or not you intend to make your own submission to the investigation.

To register your interest in this process, please contact engagement@mhlepq.org.au.

The Minister requested that the Queensland Mental Health Commission investigate the abuse allegations at Wolston Park Mental Hospital and make recommendations to the Minister. We at MHLEPQ note that the investigation has bipartisan support and will therefore continue even if there is a change of government in the upcoming October Queensland State Election.

This investigation follows the tireless campaigning by the families and friends of the victims of Wolston Park, as well as by consumers. It is alleged that from the 1950s until the hospital's closure in 2001, many patients faced sexual abuse, beatings, and frequent use of chemical restraints. It should also be noted that, at that time, whistleblowers were often silenced, and past patients were labeled as delusional and denied access to any formal complaint processes.

The MHLEPQ supports this investigation, as the victims, family members, and consumers deserve to be heard and have their stories told. Although this hospital may be long gone, for many, the trauma and memories remain.

However, this investigation seems to suggest that abuse and mistreatment in the mental health system are features of the past only, providing people with justice by exposing these wrongdoings. Any current users of the mental health system know that mistreatment and abuse are not just historical; they happened yesterday, they happen today, and if nothing changes, they will happen tomorrow.

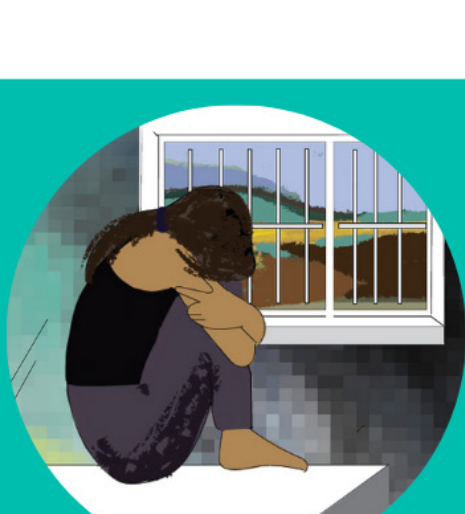
Just as the victims of Wolston Park Mental Hospital felt silenced and disbelieved, so do today's mental health system consumers. We regularly share stories of consumers who are threatened and coerced into agreeing to treatment they do not want, as refusal is seen as a lack of capacity. We frequently hear from consumers who experience restrictive practices used as punishment rather than for their safety and care. We also hear from consumers whose wishes and preferences are completely ignored in their treatment and care.

Despite legislative and policy requirements to the contrary, consumers' human rights are routinely disregarded when decisions about their care are made. When they request to see their care plans and records, they are often denied access or permitted only under the supervision of a psychiatrist, at their own expense.

For the same reasons that historical abuse occurred at Wolston Park Mental Hospital for decades, the abuse of patient rights continues for a large group of consumers today. While some within the mental health system are well supported and cared for, a significant group still has their rights undermined or denied.

We do not want to detract from the victims of Wolston Park Mental Hospital having their stories told, but the MHLEPQ is also calling for a truth-telling process that allows current and more recent consumers to share their stories. We hope that by doing so, we can jointly generate recommendations for a better, fairer, and rights-based mental health system in Queensland.

Predictable Findings



The QLD Health Department Panels Investigation into the Deaths of Three Mental Health Patients at Prince Charles Hospital

In the span of 18 months, three patients died, and two were significantly injured at Prince Charles Hospital; yet, the hospital found no reason to investigate. This changed only when the matter became public after an [article by ABC Brisbane North](#) was published. Following this media exposure, the hospital established a panel of Queensland Department of Health employees to conduct an independent investigation.

Unsurprisingly, the panel of five investigators was led by a senior clinician but included individuals with lived experience. While we have not yet accessed the full report, the executive summary and recommendations have been made available for [public review here](#).

Predictably, the review and recommendations concluded that the hospital needed better facilities and more staff. The panel accepted the hospital's findings without further scrutiny.

However, neither the review nor the recommendations addressed the forced treatment these individuals endured. There was no consideration of the fact that all five patients were placed in a closed, locked ward due to perceived risks to their safety. No attention was paid to their human rights or the tragic reality that, despite these precautions, three patients died and two were injured. The executive summary and recommendations made no mention of whether forced care was appropriate for these individuals' circumstances, despite the requirements of the Queensland Human Rights Act to consider such factors.

Upon reading the recommendations, it is clear that the hospital system is reviewing itself from an internal perspective. MHLEPQ called for the investigation to be led by a person with lived experience to ensure that it reflected the perspectives of the five patients before their deaths and injuries.

As we strive for a hospital system based on human rights principles and a person-centered approach, it is deeply disappointing to see these core principles sidelined in an investigation as crucial as this one.





Stay Updated.

**CURRENT ACTIVITIES,
REQUESTS AND EVENTS**

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