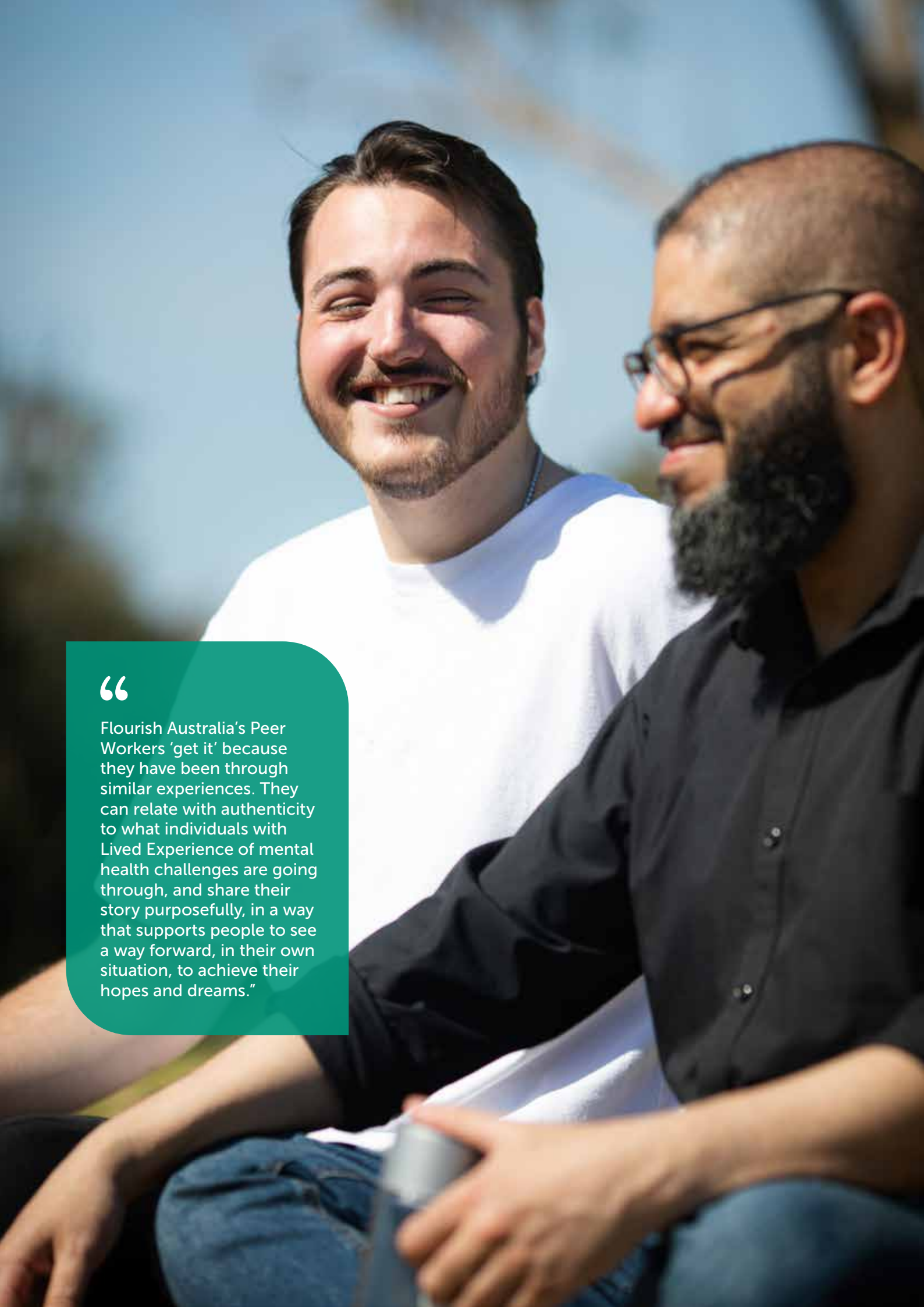




# Peer Workforce Framework ©



Where mental wellbeing thrives

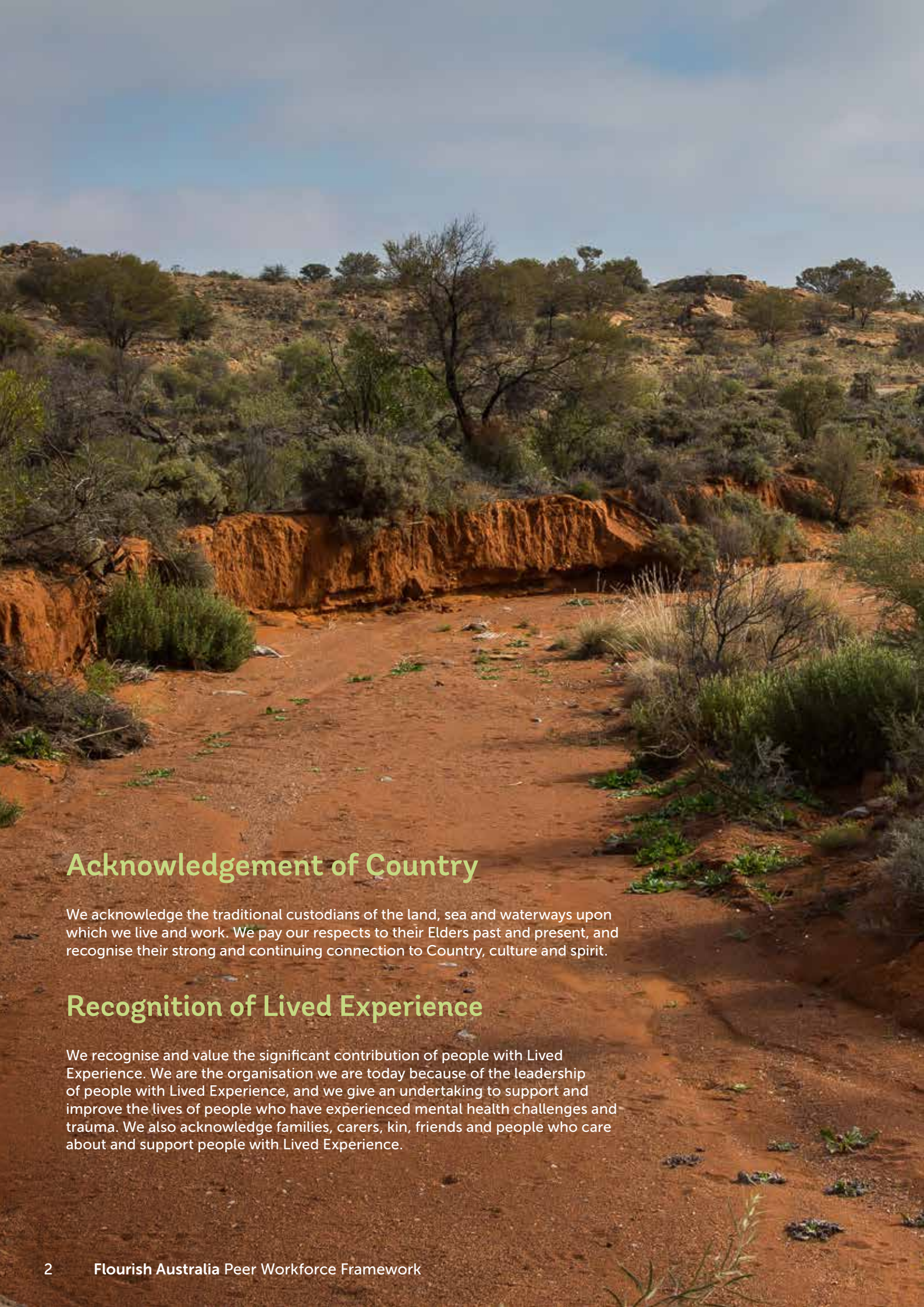


“

Flourish Australia's Peer Workers 'get it' because they have been through similar experiences. They can relate with authenticity to what individuals with Lived Experience of mental health challenges are going through, and share their story purposefully, in a way that supports people to see a way forward, in their own situation, to achieve their hopes and dreams.”

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## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways upon which we live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and recognise their strong and continuing connection to Country, culture and spirit.

## Recognition of Lived Experience

We recognise and value the significant contribution of people with Lived Experience. We are the organisation we are today because of the leadership of people with Lived Experience, and we give an undertaking to support and improve the lives of people who have experienced mental health challenges and trauma. We also acknowledge families, carers, kin, friends and people who care about and support people with Lived Experience.



## Codesign Contributors

A special thank you to all the people who codesigned this Peer Workforce Framework:

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A special mention also to all the staff who participated in the multiple workshops involved in the codesign of this Framework.



Flourish Australia has been committed to growing the Peer Workforce for over two decades. Lived Experience inspired and led, we have been on the forefront of growing, training and supporting Peer Workers nationally.

## Message from the CEO

Our commitment and leadership in this area is well recognised. It is demonstrated by the large number of Peer Workers employed by Flourish Australia integrated into service delivery teams, as well as our Peer Worker recruitment, employment, development and peer supervision practices, underpinned the groundbreaking Why Not a Peer Worker?<sup>®</sup> strategy.

This Framework has been developed to bring Flourish Australia's specific approach to Peer Work together in one coherent document. It emphasises that growing and supporting the Peer Workforce requires consideration of organisational readiness and leadership, and a continual recommitment to growing opportunities for Peer Worker employment.

The importance of the intentionality of this activity cannot be understated. It is deeply rooted in a commitment to protecting and promoting human rights, the principle of "nothing about us without us", and supported by a growing evidence base of Peer Work's effectiveness.

The Peer Work values and principles in this Framework provide an important point of reflection for Peer Workers, Peer Work supervisors, managers and the whole organisation. It is essential that Peer Work practice stays true to these values and principles, and is not subsumed into, or colonised by, other models of service delivery. In this respect the importance of specialist Peer Work supervision cannot be overstated.

I want to acknowledge the great work of the working group that codesigned this Framework, led by Chris Grumley, Specialist Peer Worker and Fay Jackson, General Manager, Inclusion. It is made additionally powerful because of the work of the working group, drawing on their experience as individuals with personal Lived Experience, as Peer Workers, and as Lived Experience leaders and advocates.

The book we published in 2018, *Peer Work in Australia: A new future for mental health* (Meagher et al, 2018) summarises well in its title that we are in a new future, an exciting period of growth and development of the Peer Workforce in mental health services. This Framework provides the scaffolding on which that can be achieved, and through which people with Lived Experience accessing Flourish Australia's support can live contributing lives in their local communities.

**Mark Orr AM**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
August 2025

# Introduction

At Flourish Australia, we believe Peer Work is integral to mental health recovery, one that reflects our core value of hope. Peer Work is the future for mental health supports (Meagher et al, 2018) and we are proud to have established one of the largest peer workforces in the country (Jackson & Fong, 2017). With over two decades of experience employing Peer Workers, they make up 42% of our frontline workforce. However, a total of 55% of our staff identify as having a lived experience of mental health challenges, reflecting our ongoing commitment to embedding Lived Experience at every level of our organisation.

Flourish Australia's Peer Workers 'get it' because they have been through similar experiences. They can relate with authenticity to what individuals with Lived Experience of mental health challenges are going through, and share their story purposefully, in a way that supports people to see a way forward, in their own situation, to achieve their hopes and dreams.

Being on a mental health recovery journey is important for Peer Workers who support individuals on their own mental health journeys. Having navigated the complexities of mental health themselves, Peer Workers bring a unique, empathetic perspective that training alone cannot provide. Their personal experiences of recovery imbue them with a deep understanding and credibility that fosters trust and connection with those they support. This Lived Experience enables them to offer hope and practical strategies, demonstrating that recovery is not only possible but attainable. Peer Workers play a critical role in supporting individuals to reclaim their lives, promoting a culture of healing and well-being within the community.

For Flourish Australia, Peer Work is a practice that involves using personal life experiences of trauma, mental health challenges, psychological distress, enforced treatment, recovery and service-use, to inform the practice of supporting and mentoring people who may share similar experiences.

The experiences leveraged by Peer Workers have profoundly influenced those engaged in Peer Work, leading to the development of what is termed 'Lived Expertise'. This Expertise is devoted to Peer Practice in an open, meaningful, and intentional manner to establish beneficial relationships rooted in mutuality, reciprocity, hope for the future, recovery, and the advocacy of human and civil rights.

Lived Expertise helps enhance staff education, service culture, and understanding. It also plays a crucial role in creating, reviewing, researching, reporting, training, and managing service delivery.

People who engage in Peer Work practice undertake their work using their Lived Expertise that embraces both their own experience and that of the Lived Experience community. Peer Workers and other designated Lived Experience staff ensure that the Lived Experience perspective is present, integrated and have a voice in all things regarding people with a Lived Experience, including both staff and people accessing supports (Jackson et al, 2021).

Flourish Australia's  
Peer Workers 'get it'  
because they have  
been through similar  
experiences.

Flourish Australia  
have been employing  
Peer Workers for  
**20+ years.**





# 1

## Flourish Australia's Peer Work Journey

Flourish Australia has been serving Australian communities for 70 years providing practical support for people with Lived Experience of a mental health challenge, as well as their families, carers and kin.

Flourish Australia represents one of the most specialised mental health support services available in Australia. We employ one of Australia's largest Peer Workforces. Peer Work is a cornerstone of our proven, strengths-based, recovery oriented, trauma-informed approach to bringing about the positive and lasting change people seek in their lives.

Flourish Australia partners with individuals who have personal Lived Experience of a mental health challenge, aiming to provide support to face daily challenges. Our goal is for individuals to lead ordinary, or even extraordinary, lives. At Flourish Australia, we emphasise strengths, aspirations, and dreams, working together to build self-confidence, develop skills, and create opportunities necessary for pursuing their goals and living fulfilling lives.

Peer Work at Flourish Australia offers the opportunity for people to build meaningful connections through mutuality and shared understanding. When trust is earned and established, Peer Work can provide healing of past experiences, empowering people in their recovery and social citizenship

Flourish Australia's aim is for at least **50%** of service delivery staff to be Peer Workers

## 2

# Purpose of Flourish Australia's Peer Workforce Framework

The purpose of Flourish Australia's Peer Workforce Framework is to support an approach to Peer Work that:

1. Demonstrates the value Flourish Australia places on Lived Experience and Peer Work.
2. Provides role clarity for Peer Workers and other Flourish Australia staff.
3. Describes the organisation's role in supporting and developing the Peer Workforce.
4. Informs consistent Peer Work practice across Flourish Australia.

# 3

## The Evidence Supporting Peer Work

There is growing evidence supporting the effectiveness of Peer Work, which offers authentic connection and helps people navigate services and relationships while improving the quality of care (Meagher & Naughtin, 2018; Smit et al, 2024; Crane, Lepicki & Knudsen, 2016). Participation in Peer Support programs has been shown to foster greater community involvement, enhance social support, improve social skills, and strengthen social functioning (Repper & Carter, 2011; Forchuk, Martin, Chan & Jensen, 2005). Additionally, Peer Work has been found to boost self-esteem and increase levels of hope for participants (Razlaff, McDiarmid, Marty & Rapp, 2006).

Peer Work is particularly effective in building connections with people who may be hesitant to engage with services due to past experiences or systemic barriers. Peer Workers draw on their own Lived Experience to create a sense of shared understanding, which helps reduce feelings of judgment or stigma. This authenticity fosters trust and makes it easier for people to open up and engage. Peer Workers have demonstrated strong skills in engagement and communication, especially with individuals facing complex challenges such as co-occurring mental health and substance use issues (Sells, Davison, Jewell, Falzer & Rowe, 2006). By bridging the gap between people accessing services and clinical or support staff, Peer Workers complement the broader workforce and contribute to more holistic, person-centred care (Davidson, Bellamy, Guy & Miller, 2012).

There is growing evidence that Peer Work can help reduce hospital admissions. People engaged in Peer Support often experience fewer hospitalisations and longer periods of stability in the community (Repper & Carter, 2011). This may be due to the unique relational approach Peer Workers bring—offering non-clinical, empathetic support grounded in Lived Experience, which can de-escalate distress and encourage early help-seeking. For example, one study found that a Peer Support outpatient program led to a 50% reduction in readmissions compared to standard outpatient care (Chinman, Weingarten, Stayner & Davidson, 2001). Peer Workers have also been shown to inspire hope, model recovery, and reduce crises that might otherwise lead to hospitalisation (Bellamy, Schmutte & Davidson, 2017).

The National Mental Health Workforce Development Guidelines recognise and promote Lived Experience (Peer) Work as a distinct discipline (Byrne et al, 2021). Since their release, there has been significant progress in establishing Peer Work as a valued and specialised field. Flourish Australia's Peer Workforce Framework builds on this momentum, reinforcing our commitment to leading the development of a strong and impactful peer workforce in Australia.

# 4

## Lived Expertise and Peer Work

**Lived Expertise** plays a crucial role in Peer Work and in building meaningful connections with the people Flourish Australia supports. Peer Workers foster trust and understanding through self-disclosure, openness, and a willingness to deeply engage with people's experiences, rights, needs, and preferences. Peer relationships are grounded in mutuality, shared understanding, and hope, inspiring others through authentic dialogue and connection.

This expertise is rooted in the core values and principles of Peer Work. It draws on both individual and collective experiences of mental

health challenges, healing, and navigating systems. These insights complement, rather than replicate, other professional knowledge and skillsets.

Importantly, Lived Expertise is not solely about having Lived Experience, it is cultivated through reflective practice, training and development, Peer Supervision, and ongoing application in supporting others. It is recovery-oriented, person-led, and trauma-informed.

While sharing Lived Experience is fundamental to Peer Work, when it is done intentionally and purposefully, it strengthens

relationships, fosters emotional safety, and inspires personal growth for both the Peer Worker and the person they support.

Peer Workers bring a unique depth of insight into what others may be experiencing and the impact of those experiences. Through shared understanding and firsthand knowledge of distress, healing, and systemic barriers, Peer Workers at Flourish Australia use their Lived Expertise to build trust, foster connection, and support transformation in people, services, and systems.

“

The fact that there is such a high concentration of Peer Workers on board is a reflection of a culture that earns people's trust.”

*Brad, Peer Worker, Seven Hills*



# 5

## Peer Work Core Values and Principles

*Extracted from the National Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines (2021).*

### Peer Work Values

At the heart of Peer Work lies a values-driven approach that honours the transformative power of Lived Experience. The National Lived Experience Workforce Development Guidelines (2021) identify core values and principles as foundational to Peer Work practice. These are not abstract ideals; they are lived, felt, and enacted through every interaction Peer Workers have with the people they support. They guide how Peer Workers build relationships, foster trust, and advocate for recovery-oriented, person-led care.

Core values	What does it mean?
<b>Hope</b>	Belief in people’s fundamental capacity to overcome challenges.
<b>Equality/equity</b>	Working from a place of common humanity and vulnerability. Actively working to minimise power imbalances.
<b>Mutuality</b>	Being in a relationship with another person where both people learn, grow and are challenged through the relationship. Sharing responsibility in relationships.
<b>Empathy</b>	Understanding another’s experience from a point of common experience and genuine connection.
<b>Choice</b>	Acknowledging and respecting each person’s choices, dignity of risk and boundaries. Acknowledging that the person is the expert of their own experience.
<b>Respect</b>	Honouring another’s view and experience without judgement or making assumptions.
<b>Authenticity</b>	Integrity, being open, honest, trustworthy, and transparent in work practices and relationships. Valuing the use of Lived Experience and vulnerability in the service of others transforms these from what may have been perceived as weaknesses into strengths.
<b>Belonging/inclusion</b>	Respecting and understanding the value of inclusion and impact of exclusion. Recognising intersectionality and valuing diversity culture, spirituality, membership
<b>Interdependence/ interconnectedness</b>	Recognition that we exist in relationships and that the relationships with families and/or social networks are often impactful in our lives and important to healing.
<b>Justice/Human Rights</b>	Understanding the impact of social justice/inequity on identity and opportunity e.g. race, culture, sexual orientation. Recognising that equal access to resources and support is an important factor in everyone’s recovery and healing. Recognising the consumer movement as a response to the history of social injustice and discrimination towards people with Lived Experience. Recognising how Lived Experience work is connected to the human rights movement and upholding the human rights of people with Lived Experience.

# Peer Work Principles

Guiding principles translate the values of Peer Work into everyday practice. They define how Lived Experience is applied with purpose, integrity, and impact. These principles shape the character of Peer Work and guide organisations, funders, and policy makers in designing roles, programs, and systems that stay true to Lived Experience values.

Principles	What does it mean?
<b>Lived experience as expertise</b>	The expertise that arises from a Lived Experience is of equal value to other types of expertise, including academic qualifications.
<b>Self-determination</b>	Respecting individual choice and personal agency.
<b>Recovery-focused</b>	Recognises that individuals can define what recovery/healing means to them, and each person can create a life that is meaningful for them. Interactions are underpinned by hope.
<b>Person-directed</b>	Service access and individual recovery planning/ journey is directed by the person themselves and recognises the person as the expert of their own experiences. Respects where each individual happens to be in their journey of recovery/ healing, and recognises that goals, values, spirituality, beliefs, and choices will be unique to each person.
<b>Strengths-based</b>	Identifying and drawing on existing strengths to support growth, recovery and healing. Recognising the value/learning that can come from experiences of crisis.
<b>Relational</b>	Relationships are the basis of practice, and connection is used to build relationships of trust. Recognises relationships built on trust and respect as foundational to working effectively with other Lived Experience workers and within multi-disciplinary environments.
<b>Trauma-informed</b>	Acknowledges the impact and prevalence of trauma, negative experiences and loss of control and power. Emphasises the need for physical, psychological and emotional safety. Creates opportunities for empowerment and for people to take an active role in their own healing/recovery. This is also captured in the Lived Experience conviction that it is better to ask <i>"What happened to you?"</i> not <i>"What is wrong with you?"</i>
<b>Humanistic</b>	The relational nature of Lived Experience work is recognised for its effectiveness to engage people through human connection and a holistic focus.
<b>Voluntary</b>	Participation is always voluntary (not coercive) and Lived Experience workers often take an active role in working towards eliminating forced treatment and restrictive practice.



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# Translating the National Core Values and Guiding Principles into Peer Work Practice at Flourish Australia

<b>Choice</b> Focuses on how Peer Work supports meaningful relationships and provides spaces for informed decisions and autonomy.	1. Peer Work supports choice and encourages informed decision making.
	2. Peer Work demonstrates, encourages, and advocates for Person-Led practice.
	3. Peer Work supports Dignity of Risk, advocating against the use of overly risk-adverse practices or mindsets.
<b>Approach &amp; perspective</b> Focuses on the lens through which Peer Work is practiced, utilising Lived Expertise.	4. Peer Work embodies mutuality, reciprocity and hope.
	5. Peer Work is empathic, practiced through a lens of emotional sensitivity authenticity, and transparency.
	6. Peer Workers hold pride in their practice, taking care not to be inappropriately influenced by other practices.
	7. Peer Work is possibility and strength-focused.
	8. Peer Work is honest, transparent, and compassionately direct. Peer Work compassionately challenges people's limiting beliefs.
<b>Advocacy &amp; self-confidence</b> Supports others to be agents of change in their lives and promotes positive change in community, services, and systems.	9. Peer Work encourages advocacy and self-confidence.
	10. Peer Work promotes, facilitates and advocates for positive change in individual lives, services, the community, and organisational culture.
	11. Peer Work focuses on ensuring the dignity human and civic rights of all people.
<b>Hope and wellbeing</b> Focuses on building and practicing resilience, self-determination, and personal growth.	12. Peer Work embodies and holds hope, demonstrating the power of Lived Experience, Recovery, Social Citizenship and the building of resilience.
	13. Peer Workers practice meaningful self-care and regularly reflect on their own wellbeing. They also model this to others.
	14. Peer Workers recognise that feelings of grief, shame and guilt are complex parts of the human experience. Therefore, they support others to compassionately reframe their challenges and life narratives.
<b>Respect &amp; inclusivity</b> Guides a practice that embraces diversity, encourages self-discovery, and promotes continuous understanding.	15. Peer Work is respectful in all aspects of its practice.
	16. Peer Work is opened-minded and inclusive, understanding that people have different worldviews to be explored.
	17. Peer Workers encourage curiosity and are naïve enquirers.
	18. Peer Work supports transformation and community participation, inspiring people to claim their Social Citizenship.
<b>Accountability</b> aims to ensure a high level of ethical conduct and responsibility.	19. Peer Workers respect and maintain confidentiality for all, understanding the power and impact information can have.
	20. Peer Work embraces accountability, and advocates for others to be appropriately accountable.



# 6

## Peer Work in Practice

Peer Work at Flourish Australia is deeply rooted in the organisation's core values. Peer Workers, in particular, draw on their own personal experiences, developed into Lived Expertise, to connect with and support people facing similar challenges. They build relationships based on mutual understanding, trust, and shared experience, walking alongside people as they navigate their recovery journey.

Peer Workers model hope, recovery, social citizenship, and connectedness, while also advocating for individuals, supporting them to advocate for themselves and make links to the community that meet their recovery needs and goals.

Peer Workers promote positive self-care strategies, enrich social and living skills, increase vocational competence, and improve community integration. They support skill development through self-directed learning, training and education, and encourage shared learning experiences.

Peer Workers ensure that the Lived Experience perspective is present, integrated, and heard in all aspects of their work, contributing to the reduction of stigma and discrimination around mental health.

At Flourish Australia, we believe that supporting people through challenges fosters self-confidence and resilience. Meaningful recovery conversations often happen during everyday activities, such as preparing meals, attending appointments, or going for a walk. These moments are not incidental, they are opportunities for connection, empowerment, and growth.

Peer Work and practical tasks complement each other, supporting skill development and person-led solutions. Peer Workers use these daily activities to build stronger, more natural relationships. We call this Impactful and Practical Peer Work.

Impactful and Practical Peer Work refers to the intentional use of shared, everyday experiences to foster connection, model recovery, and support people in achieving their goals. It is grounded in mutuality, choice, and shared humanity. Participating in common activities, like heading to an appointment or learning a

new skill together, helps ease and naturalise the relationship between the person and the Peer Worker. These indirect interactions create space for sharing personal Lived Experience, reduce power imbalances, and support the person to take charge of their recovery.

Peer Workers draw on their own Lived Experience in ways that are intentional, respectful, and responsive to the needs and preferences of the person they are supporting. They remain mindful in their approach, using reflective practice to ensure their support stays aligned with the person's goals and recovery journey.

Impactful and Practical Peer Work is not about doing things for people but doing things with people. It is a way of walking alongside someone, offering support and solidarity through shared experience. Through these everyday moments, Peer Workers model hope, build trust, and support transformation in people's lives.

# 7

## Training and Development

Flourish Australia is committed to growing a capable, impactful, and values-driven Peer Workforce. Training and development are central to this commitment, ensuring Peer Workers are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and values to deliver purposeful, ethical and person-led support.

### Foundational Training

New Peer Workers complete training to establish role clarity, build understanding of professional boundaries, and strengthen recovery-oriented practice. This foundation also supports the transformation of personal experience into Lived Expertise, the intentional and values-driven use of Lived Experience to support others.

### Ongoing Development

Professional growth continues throughout a Peer Worker's career. Flourish Australia provides ongoing development opportunities to deepen skills and strengthen Peer Work practice over time. These opportunities ensure Peer Workers remain grounded in Peer Work values, deliver high-quality, person-led support, and continue to grow in their practice.

### Professional Boundaries

Maintaining professional boundaries is essential to effective Peer Work. Purposeful sharing of Lived Experience is always done with care, intention, and in response to the needs of the person being supported. Peer Workers develop the skills to balance sharing with professionalism, considering timing, context, and relevance. Regular Peer Supervision supports this practice, ensuring Peer Work remains safe, intentional, and aligned with Flourish Australia's values and principles.



# Foundations of Peer Work

Flourish Australia is committed to providing foundational training to Peer Workers to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and reflective practices to step into their roles with confidence and clarity. This will ensure Peer Work is practiced safely, ethically, and provide a strong base for professional growth.

**1. Understanding Peer Work**  
Peer Work is a distinct practice. Training provided explores its purpose, value, and contribution and how it differs from other roles and practices in the mental health sector.

**2. Honouring History**  
Peer Workers develop a deep understanding the rich history of social movements, advocacy and Lived Experience leadership that shaped the development of Peer Work.

**3. Peer Work Values**  
Peer Workers develop a deep understanding of the core values and principles of Peer Work and how to translate them into everyday practice.

**4. Building Relationships**  
Peer Workers develop relationships based on trust, mutuality, and respect, while adapting Peer Work practice across diverse contexts and roles.



**5. Peer Work in Practice**  
Peer Workers learn how to integrate Peer Work into their daily practice, activities and routines, using ordinary moments as opportunities for connection, empowerment, and recovery.

**6. Purposeful Use of Lived Experience**  
Peer Workers reflect on personal experiences to identify what is safe and helpful to share, applying this knowledge with care, intention, and professionalism.

Foundational training in Peer Work provides the basis to develop one’s own personal experiences into Lived Expertise, enabling Peer Workers to walk alongside others with authenticity, integrity, and purpose.

## Communities of Practice

At Flourish Australia, Communities of Practice (CoPs) are a part of our commitment to strengthening and sustaining high quality Peer Work. They are a vehicle which enables continuous development and learning for our Peer Workforce.

All CoPs are guided by a shared commitment to:

- **Mutuality and Shared Purpose:** CoPs are built on trust, equality, and collective wisdom, fostering relationships that minimise power imbalances.
- **Reflective Practice:** Peer Workers engage in values-aligned reflection to deepen insight and improve Peer Work practice.
- **Collaboration and Co-learning:** CoPs promote shared learning across teams, roles, and services.
- **Supportive Environment:** CoPs offer emotional safety, peer mentoring, and shared problem-solving.
- **Professional Growth:** CoPs may explore training, development, and career pathways for Peer Workers.
- **Respect for Boundaries:** CoPs are not for performance management; they ensure confidentiality and support role clarity.
- **Inclusivity and Diversity:** CoPs welcome diverse perspectives and encourage culturally safe, trauma-informed practices.





# 8

## Peer Supervision

Peer Supervision is an essential part of Flourish Australia's approach to sustaining a safe, valued and thriving Peer Workforce. It provides a structured and reflective space where Peer Workers can explore values, practice, wellbeing and uphold the integrity of Peer Work.

Peer Supervision is distinct from line management or performance monitoring. It is a supportive process, facilitated by a trained Peer Supervisor, and prioritises reflection and learning in relation to Peer Work practice.

The objectives of Peer Supervision are to:

1. Develop a clear understanding of Peer Supervision, including the distinct roles and responsibilities of both the Peer being supervised and the Peer Supervisor.
2. Translate Peer Work values and principles into impactful Peer Work.
3. Engage in reflective practice and self-care, strengthening resilience and sustaining wellbeing.
4. Deepen Lived Expertise and explore how it enriches Peer Work in everyday practice.
5. Cultivate Lived Experience leadership and identify pathways for growth and professional development within Lived Experience and Peer Work.

Embedding Peer Supervision in this framework is core to Flourish Australia's commitment to creating a safe, reflective, and empowering environment where Peer Workers can thrive.



# 9

## Wellbeing

At Flourish Australia, the wellbeing of our Peer Workforce is important to sustaining safe, ethical, and impactful Peer Work practice. We recognise that Peer Work involves the intentional use of Lived Experience, which includes emotional labour, vulnerability, and deep reflection. Therefore, supporting the wellbeing of Peer Workers is essential.

### Supporting Peer Worker Wellbeing

Flourish Australia is committed to creating a workplace culture that actively supports the wellbeing of Peer Workers through:

- **Personal Wellbeing Planning:** Peer Workers are encouraged to develop a Personal Situation Plan that identifies helpful strategies, supports, and contacts to maintain wellness at work. These plans are voluntary, strengths-based, and for all Flourish Australia staff.
- **Peer Supervision and Reflective Practice:** Regular access to both operational and peer supervision provides Peer Workers with structured opportunities to reflect on practice, explore challenges, and receive support in a safe and values-aligned environment.
- **Peer Connection and Mutual Support:** Peer Workers are supported to connect with one another through Communities of Practice, informal peer networks, and reflective spaces that foster belonging, shared learning, and emotional safety.
- **Access to Wellbeing Resources:** Peer Workers have access to Flourish Australia's Employee Assistance Program and other wellbeing supports, including resources for managing vicarious trauma, stress, and emotional fatigue.
- **Psychosocial Safety and Organisational Culture:** Flourish Australia is committed to cultivating a workplace culture that values Lived Experience, promotes psychological safety, and ensures that workloads, expectations, and environments are conducive to wellbeing.

### Reasonable Adjustment and Inclusion

Flourish Australia recognises that wellbeing is supported by inclusive, flexible, and responsive work environments. Reasonable adjustments are available to ensure that Peer Workers can thrive in their roles while honouring their individual needs and circumstances.

Examples of reasonable adjustments may include:

- Flexible work hours or remote work options
- Adjusted duties or workload modifications
- Quiet or low-stimulation spaces for self-regulation
- Assistive technology or tailored resources
- Alternative supervision formats or communication styles

All reasonable adjustments are made collaboratively, respectfully, and in alignment with Flourish Australia's commitment to equity and inclusion.

A photograph of three people smiling at an outdoor event. On the left is a woman with glasses wearing a pink top. In the middle is a woman with sunglasses on her head wearing a black and white striped top. On the right is a man with glasses wearing a blue jacket. They are sitting on a wooden bench. A large blue circle with the number '10' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# 10

## The Role of Leaders in Peer Work

The role of Flourish Australia's leaders in Peer Work is multifaceted and essential to the success and sustainability of the Peer Workforce. Leaders are responsible for ensuring that the Lived Experience perspective is integrated and heard across all levels of the organisation, including among staff and people accessing supports (Jackson et al., 2021).

Effective leadership of Peer Workers involves building genuine, trusting relationships with the Peer Workforce, valuing and understanding their practice and perspectives, and fostering a positive, inclusive, and respectful working environment. Our leaders also contribute to the ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement of Peer Work practices.

Our leaders will ensure that people accessing Flourish Australia's services can connect with a Peer Worker when requested. They are also responsible for

supporting Peer Workers' wellbeing through access to high-quality Peer Supervision, relevant training and development opportunities, and supportive job design.

To fulfil these responsibilities, it is important that Flourish Australia's leaders are equipped with dedicated training in Peer Work values, principles, and practices. This will support our leaders to uphold the integrity of Peer Worker roles and to provide informed, strengths-based support to the Peer Workforce.

Leaders also play a key role in maintaining the Why Not a Peer Worker? approach to recruitment, which prioritises the inclusion of Peer Workers in service delivery and support roles (Jackson & Fong, 2017).



## Conclusion

Flourish Australia's Peer Workforce Framework outlines our commitment to Lived Experience and Peer Work across our organisation. This Framework emphasises the importance of Peer Work in personal recovery, highlighting how our Peer Workforce uses their personal experiences to relate authentically, foster mutual relationships rooted in hope and recovery, and support advocacy for human rights.

The Peer Workforce Framework details the core values and principles of Peer Work at Flourish Australia. These include promoting choice and autonomy, practicing empathy and mutuality, advocating for self-confidence and personal change, fostering hope and wellbeing, embracing diversity and inclusivity and maintaining high ethical standards and accountability. These ensure that our Peer Work is effective, respectful and promotes self-determination.

Our leaders play a pivotal role in the success of the Peer Workforce by integrating Lived Experience perspectives, supporting the Peer Workforce and fostering an inclusive and safe environment. Flourish Australia's leaders ensure access to Peer Workers when requested, provide necessary training and Peer Supervision. They uphold the 'Why Not a Peer Worker?' recruitment approach to prioritise Peer Workers in service delivery roles.

This Framework provides an overview of the evidence supporting the efficacy of Peer Work, noting that a growing body of research demonstrates it offers authentic connection, improves engagement and quality of care and enhances social citizenship. Flourish Australia's Peer Workforce Framework outlines the importance of training and Peer Supervision for our Peer Workers.

## Why not join our team?

Flourish Australia is a national leader in Peer Work, co-design and collaboration with people who have Lived Experience.

# Glossary

Term	Definition
Advocacy	Receiving support from another person to assist an individual or group of people express their views and wishes and support them to stand up for their rights.
Ethical Conduct and Professional Boundaries	The rules and limits to guide appropriate conduct in the workplace ensuring a safe working environment for the employee and for the people we support.
Compassionate Challenging	Questioning or offering feedback about someone's potentially harmful / limiting actions or beliefs without judgement.
Consumer	Common term in the mental health industry used to describe people who have a personal Lived Experience of mental health challenges and/or have accessed mental health services.
Designated Lived Experience positions/roles	Roles that require the person to have their own Lived Experience and are required to purposely use their Lived Experience in their work.
Dignity of Risk	The legal right of every person to make choices and take risks to learn, grow and have better quality of life.
Duty of Care	The legal responsibility to ensure people are not harmed by the services an organisation and its staff provide.
Self-confidence (agency)	The process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's own life and claiming one's rights.
Family/Carer/Support person	Experience of supporting someone through mental health challenges, service use, periods of healing/personal recovery.
Informed Decision Making	A choice that individuals make once they have all the information related to the decision topic.
Lived Experience	The term for describing a personal experience of mental health challenges, service use, periods of healing and personal recovery.
Lived Expertise	Lived Expertise is an extension of Lived Experience. It is cultivated through experience, reflective practice, training and development, peer supervision, and ongoing application in supporting others. It is recovery-oriented, person-led, and trauma-informed.
Lived Experience Peer Workforce	Refers to both the Peer Workforce and people in designated Lived Experience roles.
Meaning(ful) & Purpose(ful)	Doing, thinking or saying something with personal/emotional significance, and the cumulative and desired impact that drives these actions.
Mutuality & Reciprocity	A relationship based on mutual respect and trust where all parties feel personal agency.
Naïve Enquirer	Taking the role of an outside observer in conversations, holding judgement back, and listening with an open mind.
Non-Designated positions	Staff who are not employed in designated Lived Experience positions and are not required to share aspects of their Lived Experience journeys.
Othering	To view or treat a person or group of people as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself.

Term	Definition
Ownership Language	Language that is used to either claim ownership over a person or group of people, or strip self-confidence from people.
Peer Work	The practice of utilising personal Lived Experiences of significant life-changing impacts to support and mentor people who may share similar experiences.
Peer Worker	Someone who works within Peer Work practice and utilises their Lived Expertise to guide their work.
Person-Led	Where the person is supported to lead their own care and treated as a person first.
Recovery	A personal journey of discovery involving making sense of, and finding meaning in, what has happened.
Risk-Averse	Practices or mentalities that excessively avoid perceived potential risks over someone's right to Dignity of Risk.
Safe-Storytelling	Purposeful, meaningful and sustainable storytelling, completed with a trauma-informed lens for both the sharer and the recipient.
Self-Confidence (Agency)	The feeling of being in control of our actions and the consequences they have on our lives.
Self-Care	The practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own wellbeing and happiness, particularly during periods of stress.
Social Citizenship	Realised when a person is participating in, contributing to and feels included in their chosen communities.
Stigma & Discrimination	Stigma refers to an attitude or belief, discrimination is the behaviours that result from those attitudes or beliefs.
Strength-Based	Language and thinking that focuses on what a person can do, what qualities and resources they possess, and their strengths.
Trauma	Results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally distressing or life-threatening.
Trauma-Informed Care	An approach that assumes an individual is more likely than not to have a history of trauma. In trauma-informed services trauma survivors are seen as unique individuals who have experienced extremely abnormal situations and have managed as best they could.
Trauma-Informed Practice	A strengths-based framework which is founded on five core principles – safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment as well as respect for diversity. Trauma-informed services do no harm i.e. they do not re-traumatise or blame victims for their efforts to manage their traumatic reactions, and they embrace a message of hope and optimism that recovery is possible.
Vicarious Trauma	Indirect exposure to other people's trauma, including through repeated exposure to verbal, written or visual details of traumatic events.
Wellbeing	A complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors.
Worldview	A collection of attitudes, values, stories and expectations about the world around us, which inform our every thought and action.

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“

I always encourage people to hold onto hope for themselves, no matter how hard it gets; and I endeavor to live by this message myself.”

*Deborah, Peer Worker,  
Queanbeyan NSW*

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