



# What research should I participate in?

A checklist for people with lived experience of mental health challenges

## Lived Experience in research

People with lived experience are often asked to participate in mental health research. Research projects may aim to increase knowledge about what affects our mental health, improve mental health services, or test a new therapy.

These are goals that many of us would like to support. However, not all research is equal, and not all research projects acknowledge, value, or respect the expertise, contributions, and diversity of people with lived experience.

## Experts in our own lives

The expertise of people with lived experience of mental health challenges is highly valuable and needs to be central to all mental health research. Too often, lived expertise has been undervalued, underresourced, and taken for granted by researchers and in research agendasetting. In the current context of mental health reform in Victoria, we are working to embolden and amplify lived experience voices and leadership in how mental health research is done. People with lived experience who are involved in research must be valued, acknowledged, and paid fairly for our work and contributions, whether as participants, advisors, or researchers. Traditional power imbalances in research practice must be acknowledged and transformed.

## Research Participation Checklist

Lived experience principles are a good guide for making decisions about participating in research.

### Acknowledgement and respect for lived experience expertise

- The research is led by lived experience researchers and/or research partners
- The research team includes lived experience researchers
- The expertise of people with lived experience is acknowledged and valued
- People with lived experience have been involved in developing and conducting the research
- People with lived experience have been involved in the project, other than as participants

### Diversity and inclusion

- The diversity of lived experience is acknowledged (e.g., the effect of gender, sexuality, cultural background, disability, and other factors on what is being researched)
- The project address intersectional experiences related to mental health challenges
- Participant recruitment is inclusive or targeted at a priority group

### Fair payment

- Participants with lived experience are paid fairly.
- Participant payment covers travel, meals, and preparation time
- Unpaid participation (e.g., volunteer, a prize draw) is reasonable for the project, not standard practice
- Participants can choose how they will be reimbursed for their time

### Information, Ethics, Safety

- The research has been approval by a Human Research Ethics Committee, or equivalent
- The research design and procedure are trauma-informed
- Adequate support is provided for participants during and after participation, if needed
- Participants will be informed about research findings and it is easy to be kept informed

### Research impact and importance

- The research topic is important to me
- The research question has been identified as important by people with lived experience
- The research will answer important questions
- The research is likely to have impact (e.g., published, used by governments, services, advocates).
- The researchers have a plan to share their finding