



VMIAC Lived-Experience-Led Research Strategy 2023



Our Questions
Our Voices
Our Way



VMIAC works across Victoria and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and future.

It's important we acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the Traditional Owners of the lands we call Australia. We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' cultural, spiritual, physical and emotional connection with their land, waters and community. We acknowledge that this land was never ceded. VMIAC supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

CONTACT US

Phone: (03) 9380 3900

Email: research@vmiac.org.au

Mail: PO Box 59, Somerton VIC 3062

INTRODUCTION

Through our role as Victoria's Peak for people with lived experience of mental health issues or challenges, we aim to ensure that our leadership contributes to research outcomes that empower consumers, improve our mental health services, and benefit our communities.

VMIAC's strategy for advancing lived experience-led mental health research in Victoria is directed by our consumer principles and describes the actions we will take to achieve our goals.

VMIAC endorses the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (2021) for reform led by lived experience. The Final Report of the Royal Commission, particularly Chapter 36, identified 11 priorities for research centred on lived experience. Through our advocacy and partnerships, we will work with others to develop lived experience-led research policy, agendas, and priorities across the mental health sector. The Strategy also guides our internal research and evaluation program and our support and endorsement of lived experience researchers and lived experience-led research.

CONSUMERS AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

The people of Victoria are diverse, including First Nations Peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disabilities, neurodiverse people, and people of diverse genders and sexualities. VMIAC is committed to recognising and championing diversity in mental health research and evaluation.

Victorians' experiences of mental health challenges, traumas, or emotional distress are also diverse, and can be described in many ways.

At VMIAC, we use the terms consumer and lived experience to refer to people with lived experience of mental health challenges, many of whom will have accessed mental health or related services. We acknowledge that not everyone with these experiences will identify as a mental health service user.

OUR VISION

Lived experience leadership is embedded in all aspects of mental health research to improve mental health services and the lives of people with lived experience of mental health challenges.

Mental health research led by people with lived experience advances equity, human rights, and Reconciliation, and responds to the diversity of people, communities, and their experiences.

WE AIM TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY:



Recognising & responding to the diversity of lived experience



Building capacity in lived experience research & advocacy



Advancing lived experience leadership in research



Delivering information & engaging with communities, members, & diverse consumers



Promoting & supporting lived experience-led research



Promoting & supporting lived experience-led research policy, agendas, & methods



Developing research partnerships & relationships with government, research institutions, & the mental health sector

OUR PRINCIPLES

OUR RESEARCH STRATEGY IS GUIDED BY THESE BELIEFS:

People are experts in their own lives

Our policy and advocacy agenda is based on lived experience-led research, evidence, and priorities.

People have a right to self-determination

Mental health research policy, agendas, and conduct must be led by lived experience, redress disadvantage, and advance the human rights of people with lived experience.

People have the capacity to make genuine choices, free from coercion

We support people with lived experience to exercise their rights and agency to participate in research led by lived experience.

People's diversity should be recognised and embraced

Diversity and inclusion are vital in mental health research and in setting research priorities.

People should be safe, respected, valued, and informed

We identify and address gaps in knowledge about factors identified by people with lived experience as affecting our wellbeing and mental health care.

People's experiences are respected and valued

We identify and support research aligned with VMIAC's aims. VMIAC research advances our strategic plan and partnerships.

OUR FRAMEWORK

OUR LEADERSHIP

People with lived experience of mental health challenges must be at the centre of mental health research planning, conduct, and program evaluation. Our lived experience-led research strategy challenges traditional research paradigms and hierarchies to put lived experience leadership at the centre of all we do. We are committed to building the research and evaluation capacity of people with lived experience and increasing awareness of lived experience among non-consumer researchers and program evaluators.

OUR VOICES

We advocate for lived experience leadership in research and evaluation planning, theory, methods, and practices. Our strategy reflects VMIAC principles and ethics and our commitment to human rights, social change, and innovation. We advocate to ensure lived experience is embedded in all stages of research and evaluation. We are committed to increasing the access of diverse people with varied lived experience to relevant, high quality, lived experience-led research evidence.

OUR IMPACT

We aim to influence mental health policy, challenge current practice, and change people's lives by centring people with lived experience in investigating the issues that affect us. We aim to shape research and evaluation agendas across the Victorian mental health sector. The strategy will guide our work to set lived experience priorities for mental health research policy and programs with funding bodies, government, mental health services, and research institutions. In this, we seek to develop lived experience knowledge and build leadership potential.

OUR PROCESS

VMIAC EMBRACES, ENABLES, EMPOWERS, & EMBOLDENS THE LIVED EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY

We engage with:	consumers to identify research priorities	the mental health sector & community to advance lived experience leadership in research policy & funding	partners who share our values & believe in consumer-led research
We prioritise lived experience leadership by:	integrating lived experience leadership across the research process	prioritising lived experience in research & evaluation processes	
We innovate and build capacity by:	fostering innovation in research, design, and methodology	prioritising lived experience capacity-building strategies in all research & evaluation	
We translate:	the value & power of lived experience-led research	access to research outcomes for consumers & the community	into policy, advocacy, and change

OUR OUTCOMES

Engaging with consumers, stakeholders, the community	VMIAC & consumers participate in decision-making about research priorities & funding	Lived experience is acknowledged as a powerful tool of change	Victorian mental health research has greater lived experience leadership & applies consumer principles
Prioritising lived experience leadership	Research led by lived experience is respected	Researcher & lived experience collaborations based on mutual respect	
Innovation and capacity building	VMIAC supports a positive culture of research, service, & advocacy	People with lived experience are willing & able to participate in research	
Sharing research knowledge from lived experience perspectives	Greater consumer awareness that lived experience is valued in research	More lived experience-led evidence informs advocacy for policy & service reform	

IMPLEMENTING OUR RESEARCH STRATEGY

Our plan for implementing VMIAC's research strategy is based on feedback from partners and stakeholders. Many gains have been made by lived experience researchers who are changing the landscape of mental health research. We aim to complement and extend this work by building VMIAC's capacity to resource, guide, and support lived experience-led research.

BUILDING THE PROFILE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE RESEARCH & EVALUATION

Promote & support lived experience-led research agendas & approaches within VMIAC & beyond.

- Build awareness and support for lived experience research and evaluation agendas and projects, lived experience researchers, and translation of lived experience-led research.
- Work with the mental health sector to embed consumer principles, priorities, and leadership in research and evaluation agendas and approaches
- Build VMIAC's influence as an important contributor to the development of a coordinated, consumer-driven research agenda across the mental health sector.
- Establish and promote consumer-centred criteria for VMIAC research support.
- Develop best practice exemplars for lived experience-led program evaluation and improvement.

BUILDING OUR RESEARCH & EVALUATION CAPACITY – VMIAC STAFF & MEMBERS

Increase VMIAC's capacity to contribute to mental health evidence & shape the research & evaluation context to value lived experience-led research & the diverse perspectives of people with lived experience.

- Work with members, lived experience researchers, research institutions, and communities to design and develop consumer-led research, program evaluation, and knowledge translation.
- Implement organisation-wide program evaluation, co-designed with VMIAC staff and members.
- Support lived experience PhD student researchers with scholarships.
- Build partnerships to propose and tender for lived experience-led research and evaluation projects

RESOURCING RESEARCH LED BY LIVED EXPERIENCE

Secure resources to expand VMIAC advocacy for a lived experience-led research agenda.

- Fund research partnerships with lived experience researchers.
- Promote VMIAC criteria for research support and endorsement as a best practice exemplar for the mental health sector.
- Shape broader research agendas to support our advocacy and provide evidence for social change and service improvement.
- Identify, prioritise, and monitor lived experience issues for research and action in our research partnerships.
- Supporting lived experience researchers by strengthening lived experience research networks.

OUR ACTIONS - 5 KEY PROGRAMS

Five key VMIAC programs support our strategic objectives to build VMIAC's research profile and capacity, and resource lived experience-led research.

1 RESEARCH - ADVOCACY, PARTNERSHIPS, TRANSLATION

Build VMIAC's research capacity & influence

- Improve VMIAC's capacity to research issues addressed by VMIAC advocacy.
- Build the research team to effectively manage VMIAC-led research priorities and respond to growing demands for lived experience research expertise and advice.
- Research team members build research partnerships and provide research project support, secondary consultation, and advisory roles on partnership research projects. We tender for funded research projects and manage co-design with staff, members, and collaborators.
- Research team members manage research knowledge translation and dissemination in collaboration with VMIAC Engagement and Communications teams.

2 PROGRAM EVALUATION

Build VMIAC's internal program & project evaluation capacity

- Implement organisation-wide program evaluation.
- Establish an advocacy research position to evaluate VMIAC's consumer support and advocacy programs organisation-wide, including our consumer and membership engagement model. This position would identify areas for program quality improvement, conduct rapid reviews, and establish baseline data for larger research projects.
- Establish a Program Evaluation Lived Experience Advisory Panel of VMIAC members to co-design VMIAC program evaluation.

OUR ACTIONS - 5 KEY PROGRAMS

3 VMIAC RESEARCH SUPPORT & ENDORSEMENT

Establish consumer-led criteria for VMIAC research support, collaboration and endorsement to identify, promote, & partner in research that will improve consumer wellbeing.

- VMIAC research criteria will be used to assess applications for VMIAC research support and collaboration, provide guidance and exemplars for best practice, and endorse high quality lived experience-led research.

4 LIVED EXPERIENCE KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

Move research from traditional research institutions into the hands of people with lived experience & organisations who can put it to practical use.

- Translate knowledge from lived experience research into action by bringing consumers, researchers, and the lived experience sector together.
- Work with our partners, the Victorian Collaborative Centre, and research institutions to develop lived experience leadership in research.
- Through funded partnerships and MOU's, build a shared commitment to applying lived experience-led research findings.

5 LIVED EXPERIENCE VOICES IN RESEARCH

Provide opportunities through VMIAC's Research & Community Engagement teams for people with lived experience to reflect on the evidence base for change. Support consumers to identify & highlight gaps in evidence & critical issues for further research.

- Consult annually with consumers to identify priority and emerging research topics.
- Use consumer recommendations to influence priority-setting in mental health research and increase consumer involvement and leadership in research agenda-setting and principles.
- Seek funding from government and philanthropic organisations for research projects and programs whose priorities align with those identified by people with lived experience.

In Focus

Lived Experience Knowledge Translation

Knowledge translation means using research findings in the real world – translating what we know into action. VMIAC applies findings from lived experience-led research in four key ways:

1



Understanding what we have learned

We interpret research and evaluation findings in the context of existing evidence and alongside those with lived experience.

2



Sharing the knowledge

We facilitate knowledge sharing between non-consumer researchers and people with lived experience, focusing on embedding the involvement of people with lived experience as research and evaluation partners.

3



Having an impact: Setting the agenda and improving practice

We are dedicated to using research and program evaluation to improve practice, policy, and advocacy. The involvement of people with lived experience in interpreting new evidence and sharing knowledge helps VMIAC to apply research findings effectively.

4



Making a difference

We equip people with lived experience with skills to advocate for change. Sharing knowledge is more than getting the message out, it's making our voices heard and making a difference by creating and implementing new practice, policy and programs

In Focus

Lived Experience Voices in Research

As the peak Victorian organisation for people with a lived experience of mental health issues or emotional challenges, lived experience voices are at the centre of all we do.

VMIAC believes that researchers, policy makers, government, and the mental health sector must act on what people with lived experience say is most important to us and our communities.

VMIAC's Lived Experience Voices in Research Program is focused on ensuring that government priorities flowing out of the Royal Commission's recommendations match lived experience priorities. The program will promote mixed methods to translate lived experience priorities into lived experience research.

