

VMIAC Strategic Directions 2023-2026



OUR VISION

Where all mental health consumers stand proud, live a life with choices honoured, rights upheld and these principles are embedded in all aspects of society.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

VMIAC Aims to achieve by:

1. Honouring mental health consumer diversity
2. Providing advocacy for mental health consumers
3. Advancing mental health consumer workforce and leadership
4. Delivering information and training to the community
5. Enabling mental health consumer driven education and research
6. Developing strategic partnerships.



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.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

VMIAC has historically and currently uses the word *consumers* to describe people who have direct experience of mental health challenges and/or psychological and emotional distress. We respect and support that people may also describe their experience in other ways. In this document, LLE refers to *lived and living experience* of mental health challenges and/or psychological and emotional distress and more specifically unless otherwise stated LLE refers to consumer lived and living experience (rather than any other type of lived and living experience).

What is the problem we need to address?

Views of mental health are dominated by the medical/pharmacological model rather than a social determinants approach.

As a result, LLE voices are not consistently represented, recognised or valued. This leads to:

- poorer mental health outcomes for consumers due to inaccessible, unaffordable, and inappropriate services
- infringement of human rights and social justice for people with LLE
- reduced opportunities for the LLE workforce due to the lack of respect, support, and development.

This strategic plan is underpinned by VMIAC's commitment to honouring the choices of people with LLE of mental health challenges and being the lead voice for mental health in the community. Reflected in our strategic directions and goals is the aspiration that all people with mental health challenges can reach their full potential.

We achieve this through the following strategic actions:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1 LEADERSHIP GROUNDED IN EXPERIENCE

VMIAC takes a strong and dynamic leadership role within and beyond the sector standing firm in the knowledge and experience of lived and living experience. Our capacity to champion human rights and call out violations is highly regarded and is bringing results.

We will:

- pursue a human-rights based agenda unequivocally promoting consumer choice, access, and inclusion.
- be a critical ally in transformative systems change and will hold change leaders to account.
- proactively support and enable consumer voice and leadership at all levels promoting the value and importance of expertise and knowledge gained through lived and living experience.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2 A STRONG, ENGAGED AND ACTIVATED MEMBERSHIP

Our members are the core of our work and VMIAC will continue to grow, support, and engage with our diverse membership. VMIAC will listen to and involve members in meaningful relationships and conversations.

VMIAC demonstrates best practice in engaging people with LLE and members in all aspects of the organisation. Our membership is growing in size, diversity, capability and passion for change as it contributes strongly and significantly to the reform work at local, regional, state and national levels.

We adopt new and creative approaches to engaging with members and other people with LLE which may include arts-based practice approaches along with social media and other forms of communication which build community.

We will:

- engage and stay in meaningful relationship and conversation with different LLE/member groups including those engaged in the system, those in governance and advisory roles across the sector, and those in LLE workforce roles (all streams).
- focus on engaging with people most at risk of rights violations, from diverse communities, living in rural and regional communities, young people and over 60s and those who experience intersectional challenges.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3 ADVOCACY AT ALL LEVELS

Our human rights based high impact advocacy enables VMIAC to influence the system at individual, organisational, service, sector, and community levels.

By integrating these levels of advocacy, we will use the information gathered through our work in individual advocacy to identify themes emerging related to what is happening for specific groups of people with LLE and use it to inform advocacy needed in services and other organisations. Collection of this data will assist in systemic change.

We will:

- provide high quality trauma informed individual advocacy.
- support people with LLE to self-advocate.
- understand diverse consumer perspectives and be informed by diverse consumer needs relating to intersectionality.
- identify the themes emerging across diverse groups and situations.
- use the data generated to advocate for consumer interests in organisations and services.
- highlight the impact of social determinants of health and wellbeing.
- advocate for innovation and new service types.
- uphold human rights.
- rebalance power at all levels.
- prepare campaigns and other approaches to systemic advocacy.
- generate advocacy information to educate and engage the broader community.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4 COLLABORATING FOR CHANGE

We recognise that the changes needed are greater than what we can achieve alone. For this reason, we will collaborate and undertake joint action to achieve the transformation required at local, regional, state, national and international levels without compromising our integrity and values.

As a result, our partners and stakeholders value our relationship, and we have strong connections with:

- consumer groups
- families and carers through Tandem
- people with AOD issues through SHARC
- government departments and organisations with key roles in mental health and associated issues.
- First Nations organisations with which we are developing new models of healing and peer work.
- organisations and networks representing intersectionality and peak bodies across the range of diverse communities.
- LGBTQIA+ groups and organisations
- multicultural organisations
- groups which help us consider more appropriate approaches to prevention and early intervention and organisations dealing with the social determinants of mental health.
- academic and research organisations
- clinical services

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5 VMIAC IS TRUSTED AND RESPECTED AND ACTS WITH INTEGRITY

Our organising skills and experience are embedded, documented, and sought by other organisations wishing to work with us. Others have us work with them to increase their capability and capacity to change and bring people with LLE to the forefront of their work both in operations and in governance.

We are innovative and creative, both in thinking and in practice with highly diverse connections across the sector. As a learning organisation we build and share knowledge to increase wisdom and understanding. We provide a nourishing, safe and trauma informed environment for all involved which results in commitment and ongoing engagement at all levels of the organisation.

VMIAC is an organisation that is visible and has full capability for:

- Effective governance
- Accessing independent funding sources
- High quality data and research capacity and capability
- Enabling and supporting best possible relationships with people with LLE, members, and partners.
- Strong outward facing effective and authentic leadership.
- A thriving and empowered LLE staff team.

The outcomes VMIAC want to see within Victoria are:

Community acceptance and valuing of people's experience of mental health challenges and an environment where people with LLE are engaged for their wisdom, expertise, and creativity in all areas of the community and the mental health system.

Government and sector measure this by:

- a decrease in the number and proportion of people with LLE/consumers who report experiencing stigma or discrimination.
- an increase in the number and proportion of community members who demonstrate positive attitudes toward mental health.

All people with LLE of mental health challenges feel empowered to make informed decisions, advocate for their care, treatment and support and have positive experiences of mental health care, treatment, and support in the community.

Government and sector measure this by:

- an increased proportion of consumers reporting they have the knowledge they need to make decisions about their care, treatment and support and have the confidence to advocate for their own care, treatment, and support.
- a decrease in incidents of discrimination and stigma
- a decrease in the number and proportion of human rights violations in mental health services
- an increased number of consumers reporting positive interactions with mental health services.

A mental health system which supports and values lived and living experience as an essential contribution to its success.

Government and sector measure this by:

- an increased proportion of workforce reporting they have the knowledge and skills to operate in LLEW roles; have appropriate supports to fulfil their LLEW roles; feel valued by their colleagues and the service system.

A mental health system which is accessible, appropriate, person centred, and trauma informed, where consumer LLE voices lead system reform and transformation.

Government and sector measure this by:

- increased access to care, treatment, and support for consumers (e.g., decrease in waiting time, increase in range of services / supports available).
- increased numbers, and diversity of consumer representatives actively contributing to reform activities.
- an increased number of government policy positions and strategies that acknowledge and reflect consumer lived experience.