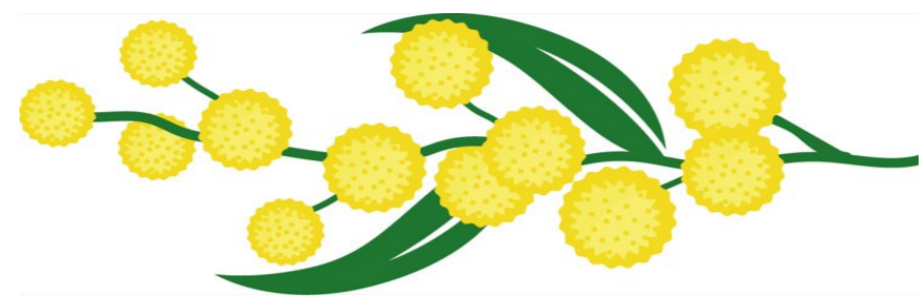


ACACIA: The ACT Consumer and Carer Mental Health Research Unit Pilot Internship Program



An intro to the ACACIA Pilot Internship Program

The pilot internship program is a major new initiative for 2023 encompassing an innovative program conceptualised by A/Prof Banfield, and designed by the ACACIA team with input from the Advisory Group.

The program consisting of short courses, mentoring and a small research project aligns with our four objectives as follows:

Research in partnership

- An embedded research project addressing two of our 92 research priorities developed by consumers and carers in 2013 and 2017.



Capacity-building

- Two Research Support Officers with lived experience as a consumer or carer were recruited into the 2023 pilot.
- Mentoring of ACACIA interns by other ACACIA researchers.
- A suite of short courses designed and delivered to the interns by ACACIA staff on the following aspects of conducting mental health research:
 - Introduction to research methodologies
 - Ethics and integrity
 - Lived experience involvement in mental health research
 - Conducting qualitative interviews
 - Analysing qualitative data
 - Literature reviewing, and
 - Writing an academic paper



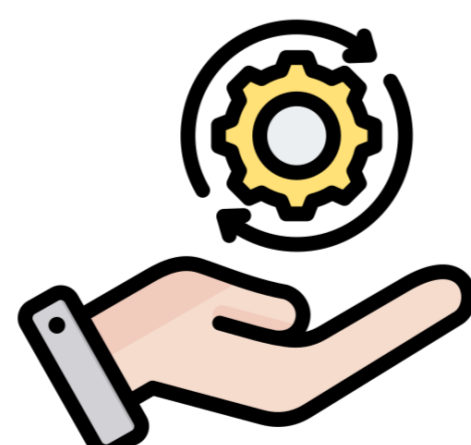
Advice to research bodies

- Generating knowledge on structures and requirements for how to embed lived experience training within academic contexts.



Research Translation

- Using learnings from the embedded research project to inform ACT Health commissioning and policy processes.



Our embedded research project: What we call ourselves? A qualitative investigation of language in mental health

The 'What we call ourselves?' study is embedded within the ACACIA Internship Program. The study addresses the two main language topics from the ACACIA priority agenda, investigating how language can be used to include and exclude, and the influence of labels.



15 interviews

conducted with consumers and carers from around Australia.



Our ACACIA interns are currently working hard to **analyse** what we've heard with mentoring from other ACACIA researchers.



The data is rich with early **findings** relating to:

- Labels and language as double-edged swords (positives and negatives; inclusion and exclusion).
- When we are just not enough for a label.
- Identity in language.
- Hearing lived experience voices.
- The power of words to help or harm.
- Guides through the language maze.



The whole ACACIA team is collaborating on a peer-reviewed paper from the study, for submission in late 2023 at the completion of the 2023 pilot internship program.

