



## Better Together

Peer work is a rapidly growing area that can have a positive impact on both consumer outcomes and satisfaction with care.

Peer work also has positive impacts for the peer workers themselves in providing meaningful employment for people with lived experience of mental health issues.

However, real-world implementation of peer work is patchy, and clearer links need to be made between programs with research evidence and current practice.



### Project aims

- (1) Examine the processes and contextual influences on successful implementation of peer work roles and
- (2) Evaluate the impact a peer worker-led program, Honest, Open, Proud, has on individuals and services.

### What we did

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, evaluation of the implementation of the peer led program was interrupted after the roll-out in one of three planned settings and remained unfeasible.

Therefore, the project team focussed on aim 1 and conducted 12 interviews. Participants were from a range of mental health service contexts and backgrounds, including people with lived experience or in peer-identified roles, clinicians, and other mental health workers and managers, sharing educational, community and clinical perspectives.



### What we found

- Core findings focussed on the importance of high-level buy-in from governmental and executive levels for peer work programs.
- While peer work has been embedded in health services in the ACT for many years, it is still seen as an emerging workforce.
- Interviewees described, and exhibited, high levels of experience and skill in implementation, policy and practice as relates to peer work, whilst indicating that these skills were not being fully utilised to grow and develop the peer workforce in the ACT.
- Greater support from policy makers and executive management, opportunities for networking with other peer workers across Canberra and the region, higher rates of pay and opportunities for career advancement, more mental health workforce training about peer work, and appropriate supervision are key to supporting workforce retention particularly of experience peers and the positive development of the peer workforce in the ACT.

### Want to learn more?

For more information about ACACIA's research projects, head to the "Our Research" page on the ACACIA website: <http://nceph.anu.edu.au/acacia>