

VICTORIAN AOD LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKFORCE (LEW) PRACTICE COMMUNITY

Community Charter and Terms of Reference

18 August 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

The Alcohol and Other Drug Lived Experience community acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we live, work and play. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded – it always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge that colonial structures and policies remain in place today and recognise the ongoing struggles of First Nations people in dismantling those structures. We know that cultural safety and capability is everyone's business, including the business of lived experience workforces and communities.

We express our deepest appreciation to the First Nations peoples for their generosity of time, knowledge sharing, expertise and support in the development of Victoria's lived and living experience communities. We are grateful for their resilience, wisdom and relentless pursuit of justice, as they inspire us to work together towards positive change. Our community has so much to learn from First Nations and we are committed to developing pathways and partnerships to support this.

As a community we embrace self-determination and reconciliation and look forward to fostering meaningful partnerships, cultural sensitivity and Aboriginal self-determination in our approach to lived experience work.



Recognition of Lived Experience

As a lived expertise-led service, SHARC recognises that people impacted by alcohol and other drugs, gambling, and related harms are experts in their own lives. Using our skills and knowledge, we break through the barriers of stigma and marginalisation, provide meaningful change in each other's lives, and positively reform service systems.



Embracing Diversity

SHARC celebrates, values and includes people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

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Introduction

The AOD Lived Experience Workforce Practice Community (the Community) has been established to cultivate a connected, influential and thriving lived experience workforce that is recognised as essential to the design, delivery, improvement and leadership of alcohol and other drug services and systems.

Grounded in the unique expertise that comes from lived experience, professional development and applied practice of this expertise, this Practice Community provides a dedicated space for learning, reflection, collaboration and collective leadership.

This Terms of Reference and Community Charter establish the shared purpose, values, governance arrangements and expectations that guide the Community in achieving its vision and supporting its members to collectively shape the future of lived experience practice.

The AOD Lived Experience Workforce Practice Community is supported by The Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Part A – Community Charter

Vision

A connected, skilled and empowered AOD Lived Experience Workforce that is recognised as an essential discipline across systems and supported to thrive.

Purpose

The Practice Community exists to bring together members of the Victorian AOD LEW to connect, learn, share knowledge, strengthen practice and support one another. Through collaboration, professional development and collective leadership, the Community contributes to a capable, sustainable and influential workforce that drives excellence in lived experience practice and positive system change.

Values

The Community is grounded in the values of the AOD LEW, that guide how we work together and what we hold one another to, as set out in the [Alcohol and Other Drug \(AOD\) Lived Experience Workforce Discipline Framework \(Victoria\) 2025](#):

Lived Expertise	The knowledge and insights gained from life-changing experiences provide unique and invaluable expertise that can transform services, systems and communities.
Empathy	Lived experience and lived expertise provide a pathway for relationships, where empathy, vulnerability and trust thrive.
Community	The Victorian AOD LEW is part of a longstanding community movement. We are diverse but unified by shared goals.
Participation	Service users have the right to participate in partner and lead in decision making that affects them.
Mutuality	In relationships, we work from a basis of mutuality, minimising power imbalances, embracing opportunities for co-learning and encouraging self-determination.
Equity	We advocate for an equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, free from stigma and discrimination.
Integrity	Our practice is underpinned by integrity, strong adherence to values and ethical principles.

Benefits

The Community offers clear value for individual members, the teams that work with them, the organisations they are employed, and the communities they provide services to, including:

- A stronger sense of professional identity and belonging through connection with others who share lived experience and practice values.
- Improved wellbeing and workforce sustainability through connection to community, practice support and professional development.
- Enhanced knowledge and practice capability through access to collective expertise, diverse experiences, and professional development.
- Improved ability to address practice challenges through reflective discussion, shared learning and collaborative problem-solving.
- Increased confidence in aligning practice with AOD LEW values and practice, improving effectiveness and enhancing impact.
- Greater influence on workforce and sector development, contributing to a collective voice that helps shape priorities and future directions.

This can provide organisations with greater workforce retention and sustainability, enhanced workforce capability, increased leadership capacity contributing to improved experiences and outcomes for people accessing services.

Part B – Terms of Reference

Objectives

The Community draws upon the collective knowledge, experience and expertise of its members to:

- Strengthen AOD LEW belonging, and professional identity.
- Co-learn, build practice skills and develop professionally.
- Inform workforce planning, development and strategic priorities.
- Collaborate, network and provide mutual support.
- Facilitate the growth, diversification and best practice of the AOD LEW.

Scope

The Community provides a forum for collaboration, knowledge sharing, professional development and collective leadership among members of the AOD lived experience workforce. The scope helps members and stakeholders understand what they can expect from the Community, keeps its activities focused and achievable, and supports the community to remain sustainable over time. The following areas are outside the scope of the Community:

- Individual employment matters or workplace disputes.
- Supervision, crisis, or clinical support for members.
- Matters relating to individual case work or discussions that disclose the identity of service users and colleagues.
- Decisions that sit with employing organisations, funders or government.
- Representing or speaking on behalf of individual organisations.

Membership

Eligibility

Membership is open to all designated AOD LEW roles except those that are in senior or executive leadership.

AOD LEW roles include peer workers, educators, coordinators, consultants, trainees etc. All members **must** be in a designated AOD LE role and have a clear function of lived experience practice.

AOD LEW roles that are senior and or executive leadership are not currently eligible. This aims to address power imbalances and the different nature of the challenges that management and leadership roles face.

Membership will be reviewed bi-annually to ensure alignment with the purpose, objectives and values of the Community.

Subject matter experts, sector representatives and other stakeholders may be invited to participate in Community activities where their contribution is relevant to the objectives of the Community. Guest participation will be determined by the Community in partnership with Peer Projects.

Community Agreement

Members of the Community contribute to a safe, respectful and collaborative environment that supports learning, connection and professional growth. Members are expected to:

- Foster psychological safety by creating an environment where people feel comfortable sharing without fear of judgement, discrimination, or retaliation.
- Promote cultural safety and inclusion by recognising, respecting, and valuing diverse identities, cultures, experiences, backgrounds, and ways of knowing.
- Contribute through sharing knowledge, skills, perspectives, and time to support the strength and growth of the Community.
- Communicate respectfully by using appropriate language, listening with curiosity, and remaining open to different viewpoints and experiences.
- Maintain confidentiality by respecting information shared within the Community – noting that personal details or identifiable information must not be disclosed without consent—share the learning, not the person.
- Declare conflicts of interest by openly disclosing any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts that may influence discussions, recommendations, decisions, or activities of the Community.

Meetings

The Practice Community will meet quarterly, with additional activities conducted through BaseCamp and other engagement opportunities.

Agendas

Draft agendas will be developed 4 weeks before formal meetings and sent to community for feedback and contributions.

Members are encouraged to present agenda items for consideration at any time in between formal meetings by emailing the secretariat/coordinator.

Minutes

Minutes will be taken at each formal meeting capturing activities, general themes of discussions, overviews of presentations/workshops etc., action items and collective decisions made by the Community.

An agenda item will be included into each meeting to approve the previous meetings minutes. Two members who attended the previous meeting must approve the minutes to be true and correct.

Decision Making

The Community will seek to operate through dialogue, collaboration and consensus wherever possible. Where consensus cannot be reached, the Community Lead will determine an appropriate process for resolution or escalation.

Roles and Responsibilities

This section describes the key roles supporting the community.

Role	Name/Organisation	Responsibilities
Executive Sponsor	Self Help Addiction Resource Centre Ltd (SHARC)	The Executive Sponsor provides strategic oversight and organisational support for the Community and promotes its value across the sector; they have the responsibility to: • Champion the Community across the sector. • Secure resources and support where required. • Address barriers to the Community's success. • Advocate for implementation of Community recommendations.
Community Lead	Peer Projects, Self Help Addiction Resource Centre Ltd (SHARC)	The Community Lead is responsible for the overall effectiveness of the Community, including strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, facilitation of meetings, and delivery of agreed outcomes; they have the responsibility to: • Set priorities and annual objectives. • Coordinate meetings and events. • Foster collaboration and engagement. • Ensure the Community delivers against its purpose. • Represent the Community in relevant meetings and forums.
Secretariat / Coordinator	Peer Projects, Self Help Addiction Resource Centre Ltd (SHARC)	The Community Coordinator provides administrative support to the Community of Practice, ensuring effective organisation, communication, and record management, they have the responsibility to: • Schedule meetings and events. • Prepare agendas and papers. • Record actions and decisions. • Maintain membership lists and communications. • Manage collaboration platforms and document repositories.

Role	Name/Organisation	Responsibilities
Community Members	Members of the Victorian AOD Lived Experience Workforce Practice Community	Community Members actively participate in discussions, share knowledge and lessons learned, contribute to community outputs, and support the adoption of good practice, they have the responsibility to: • Attend meetings and events. • Contribute expertise and guidance. • Identify emerging issues and opportunities. • Encourage broader participation. • Share knowledge, experiences, and resources. • Contribute to discussions and problem-solving. • Support collaborative activities.

Document Governance

Review

Document Owner	Community Lead
Approval Authority	Executive Sponsor
Review Frequency	Annually
Next Review Date	August 2027

Version History

Version	Date Approved	Approver	Summary of changes
0.1	2/05/2018	Crystal Clancy, Peer Projects Coordinator, SHARC	Initial ToR & Charter
0.2	17/05/2023	Brendan Ritchie, Peer Projects, Coordinator, SHARC	Review of original ToR & Charter
0.3	18/08/2026	Brendan Ritchie, Peer Projects, Senior Coordinator, SHARC	Redevelopment of ToR & Charter to match the current state of Victorian AOD LEW