

Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

LIVED EXPERIENCE SYMPOSIUM BIOGRAPHIES

Part 1: Setting the Scene

Keynote Speaker

Dr Louise Byrne (she/they)

Dr Louise Byrne is a person with multiple, first-hand, life-changing adverse experiences including mental health, suicide, homelessness, alcohol and other drugs, domestic and family violence, child sexual assault, acquired brain injury and physical disability including profound hearing loss.

Louise drew heavily from her lived experience in a range of youth work positions starting in 1998 and has worked in a broad variety of designated Lived and Living Experience roles for the last 20 years. Louise's seminal 15-year program of research has supported the growth in understanding, awareness and sustainable development of the lived experience (peer) workforce, both nationally and internationally, and helps shape the perspectives of lived experience work as a respected, credible, evidence-based discipline.

Louise's work as a strategic consultant, trainer and thought leader on the role and benefit of lived experience workforces assists meaningful implementation of research findings and promotes an evidence-informed approach to Lived Experience workforce development. In addition to her training and consulting, Louise holds a Senior Research Fellowship at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and an ongoing Assistant Professor Adjunct position at Yale University in the Program for Recovery and Community Health.

MC (Master of Ceremonies)/ Panel Moderator

Tharindu Jayadeva (he/him)

Lived Experience Participation Lead, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Tharindu Jayadeva, known as TJ, is Lived Experience Participation Lead at Alfred Mental & Addiction Health (AMAH). With a background in health promotion, community development and youth health and wellbeing, he actively participates in various organisational, community and state events, focusing on capacity building for individuals and communities.

Tharindu values collaboration, participation and empathy in his work, from facilitating workshops where all community members feel a sense of purpose and can participate meaningfully, to embedding structures that are culturally safe, mutually beneficial and strengths-based, with the aim of ensuring that project outcomes are responsive, evidence-informed and person-centred.

Welcome Presentation Presenters**Rebecca Langman (she/her)**

Director, Consumer Lived/Living Experience, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Rebecca Langman is Director of Consumer Lived/Living Experience at AMAH. She is a lived experience and consumer engagement specialist, with extensive experience in peer support roles across various mental health settings. Her career in lived experience began as a member of the Orygen Youth Advisory Council in 2017, leading to positions as a Peer Specialist in public hospital and community environments. Rebecca has held leadership roles in consumer engagement and lived experience coordination, including work on Kaurna Land as the Coordinator Consumer Engagement & Lived Experience for the Central Adelaide Local Health Network's Mental Health Clinical Program Central Adelaide Local Health Network. She was a Board Member and Deputy Chair on the Lived Experience Leadership & Advocacy Network (LELAN) board, South Australia's peak body for people with lived experience.

A firm believer in 'nothing about us without us', Rebecca is excited to walk alongside peers, carers and clinical staff on the reform journey, with the aim of a world where mental health care is recovery-focused, strengths-based and trauma informed.

Violeta Peterson (she/her)

Director, Carer Lived/Living Experience, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Violeta Peterson is Director of Carer Lived/Living Experience at AMAH. She has worked extensively across various community and health services in leadership roles and has been instrumental in contributing to this growing and vital lived experience workforce in AMAH. In her current position as the Director of Carer Lived/Living Experience, Violeta brings a depth of profound understanding, compassion and expertise to guide, shape and support the vision for an expanding family and carer lived/living experience workforce.

Panel Discussion Panellists**Sarosh Shareef (she/her)**

Carer Peer Worker, Older Adult Inpatient Unit, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Sarosh Shareef is Carer Peer Worker in the Older Adult Inpatient Unit at AMAH. She is deeply committed to centring the lived experiences of individuals on their recovery journeys, both for those facing mental health challenges and their loved ones. In her free time, Sarosh enjoys playful moments with her young person, is pampered by two cats, and loves getting out into nature.

Sarah Aoun-Walker (she/her)

Youth Peer Worker, headspace Early Psychosis Program, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Sarah Aoun-Walker is Youth Peer Worker in headspace Early Psychosis Program run by AMAH. She is currently pursuing a Master of Social Work, driven by a passion to use her lived experience to connect with and empower others. In her leisure time, she enjoys immersing herself in nature, watching animated films such as those from Studio Ghibli and exploring new dining spots with friends.

Part 2: Lived Experience in Action
Facilitators/Presenters**Gabriel Leeves (he/they)**

Carer Peer Worker, Adult Community Services, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Gabriel Leeves is Carer Peer Worker in Adult Community Services at AMAH. In this capacity, he provides vital support to family, friends and loved ones of individuals receiving services. Gabriel is committed to advocating for carers that are often unseen or overlooked within their carer role. With his lived experience as a young carer trying to navigate healthcare systems, Gabriel is particularly interested in how identity influences service delivery and design. Drawing from his identity as someone neurodivergent and LGBTQIA+, he actively seeks to enrich and bring greater diversity into the dialogue of what it means to be a carer.

Sue Belmore (she/her)

Acting Peer Program Coordinator, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Sue Belmore is Acting Peer Program Coordinator across AMAH. With 17 years of dedicated experience in lived experience peer work within mental health services, she has significantly contributed to providing consultation on lived experience to both public mental health organisations and non-governmental entities. Her expertise emphasises the invaluable contributions of lived experience to enhancing mental health care and support systems. This deep conviction arises from her own lived experience of mental health challenges. Additionally, Sue has offered supervision and mentoring to lived experience peers for the past nine years.

Heidi Farrant (she/her)

Senior Consumer Peer Worker, Adult Inpatient Unit, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Heidi Farrant is Senior Consumer Peer Worker in the Adult Inpatient Unit of AMAH. She has a diverse background encompassing various creative roles including photography, website design and development and artwork across multiple mediums and surfaces. This creative expression has provided an essential outlet for her lived experience since she was a teenager. Following insights into the significance of lived experience through multiple admissions and experiences at Prevention and Recovery Care Unit (PARC), Heidi was inspired to pursue and complete a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work. Following a peer cadetship pilot program at Alfred Health, she became a Peer Worker in the IPU and has since advanced to her current senior role. Heidi also enjoys mentoring others in the cadet program, fostering mutual learning and development.

Damon Langley (he/him)

Psychosocial Support Worker Suicide Prevention, HOPE, & Previous Peer Cadet, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Damon Langley is the Psychosocial Support Worker Suicide Prevention in the Hospital Outreach Post-Suicide Attempt Engagement (HOPE) Program in AMAH. After completing the academic modules of the Certificate IV in peer work, Damon came onboard as a student in the third intake of the AMAH Cadet Program. Upon completion of the the cadetship, Damon got his current role as the Psychosocial Support Worker Suicide Prevention, where he uses his lived experience in supporting consumers.

Bettina Abbott (she/her)

Previous Peer Cadet, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Bettina Abbott was a previous peer cadet in the third intake of the AMAH Cadet Program. After completing the cadetship, she became a member of AMAH Consumer Reference Team and continues to use her skills to inform AMAH services from a lived experience lens. She has been working on various projects in the AMAH Hospital & Emergency Services such as the redevelopment of AMAH's Short Stay Unit in the emergency department.

Part 2: Lived Experience in Action
Facilitators/Presenters**Hannah Davis (she/her)**

Previous Peer Cadet, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Hannah Davis was a previous peer cadet in the fourth intake of the AMAH Cadet Program. On completion of the cadet program, Hannah joined the MIND team in Dandenong, Victoria as a Lived Experience Peer Worker, where she continues to support consumers using her lived experience and unique artistic skills

Maria Bradshaw (she/her)

Consumer Consultant, Women's Recovery Network (Wren), Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Maria Bradshaw is a dedicated Consumer Consultant for Wren, where she passionately advocates for women navigating mental health challenges. With her unique blend of professional expertise and personal experience, Maria brings a compassionate and informed perspective to her work. Having personally experienced postpartum PTSD and PND, Maria is deeply committed to improving maternity care and advocating for women facing similar struggles. Her advocacy extends beyond the postpartum period, as she actively works to support women through various mental health issues.

Maria's advocacy is further informed by her own lived experiences with ADHD, Bipolar2 and Binge Eating Disorder. As a proud voice for the Sunflower Hidden Disabilities initiative, she works to raise awareness and support for individuals with non-visible disabilities, ensuring that their needs are met. Maria is committed to creating more inclusive and affirming environments for those navigating mental health and neurodiverse challenges. Through her role at Wren and broader advocacy, Maria continues to be a powerful and empathetic advocate for women's mental health, maternity care and hidden disabilities.

Charmaine Curtain (she/her)

Carer Peer Worker, Women's Recovery Network (Wren), Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Charmaine Curtain is Carer Peer Worker for Wren at AMAH. She has worked closely with both clinical and allied health workers to share her experience and expertise to provide support for carers and families of those struggling with mental illness. Charmaine brings a wealth of academic knowledge and personal experience from her 35-year career spanning Australian not-for-profit, government and corporate sectors. After three decades in corporate roles including Company Director, Director and Senior Investment Advisor in the financial industry, she transitioned to focus on mental health advocacy and support, devoting her time, energy and passion to various mental health causes.

Charmaine's extensive involvement includes serving on the Advisory Board for Mental Health Victoria, board membership of the "To be loved Charity," and volunteering for organisations like Kids First Australia and Disaster Recovery Australia. She is also Director of The Luminate Team, experts that work across mental health and human thriving disciplines, including training and facilitating Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses. Charmaine's passion is advocating for equitable access to mental health services and promoting relational recovery, driven by her belief that mental illness affects not just individuals but entire support networks.

Part 2: Lived Experience in Action
Facilitators/Presenters**Jan Holt (she/her)**

Carer Consultant, Strategy & Planning Team, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Jan Holt is currently Carer Consultant in AMAH's Strategy and Planning Team. She has held various roles over the past six years, including Family/Carer Peer Worker in Adult Community Services and Carer Consultant in Older Adult Community Mental Health Services. She also provides training and facilitation services across Victoria as Chief Executive Officer and owner of The Talking Thumb Coaching.

With a passion for building strong and responsive mental health care systems that place consumers, families, carers and supporters at the centre of design, Jan serves as a member of the Lived Experience Strategic Partnership with the Victorian Department of Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing Division. She is devoted to uplifting and empowering others through compassion and laughter.

Danielle Colegrave (she/her)

Family Peer Specialist and NDIS Planning Coordinator, Infant, Child & Youth Services, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Danielle Colegrave holds dual roles in Infant, Child and Youth Services within AMAH: as Family Peer Specialist with lived experience in the Developmental Assessment & Management Team, and as NDIS Planning Coordinator. Formerly a telecommunications engineer, she pursued relevant training and qualifications to support her career transition, driven by her passion for the mental health and disability sectors. Danielle is deeply committed to supporting families and promoting carer/family perspectives within mental health settings. She values the multidisciplinary environment at Alfred and enjoys collaborating with colleagues. Danielle is married with three children and is deeply fulfilled and committed to her family and pets.

Dr Shaun Rigney (he/him)

Carer Peer Support Specialist, headspace Early Psychosis Program, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Dr Shaun Rigney is a Carer Peer Support Specialist in headspace Early Psychosis Program, run by AMAH. He is a composer and classical music producer whose collaborations have earned seven ARIA award nominations, winning twice. Shaun is a proud father of two beautiful daughters.

Vanessa Lindley (she/her)

Family Peer Specialist, headspace Early Psychosis Program, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Vanessa Lindley is the Manager of Infant, Child and Youth Carer Lived Experience Workforce at AMAH. Vanessa is also a member of the Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors. Vanessa is passionate about supporting her growing workforce to provide care for families, carers and supporters seeking assistance within the youth service.

Deborah Warner (she/her)

Family Peer Specialist, headspace Youth Early Psychosis Program, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Deborah Warner is a Family Peer Specialist in headspace Early Psychosis Program, based in Frankston, Victoria. She is also the co-founder of APOD (Alcohol Prescription & Other Drugs) Family Support, where she works as a Family Practitioner. Both teams have embraced the Open Dialogue approach and emphasise collaboration and teamwork, aspects that she strongly advocates for in her practice. Deborah loves spending time with her family.

Claire Harcla (she/her)

Team Leader/ Learning Consultant, Discovery College, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Claire Harcla is the Team Leader/ Learning Consultant, Discovery College, run by AMAH. Discovery College is a recovery college, which work in partnership with headspace to co-produce courses for and with young people, professionals, and the community. A meme enthusiast, she is a lifelong lover of plants, snacks and learning.

Part 2: Lived Experience in Action
Facilitators/Presenters**Catherine Wood (she/her)**

Family Peer Specialist, Infant, Child and Youth Services & HOPE Program, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Catherine Wood is a Family Peer Specialist in Infant, Child and Youth Services, and HOPE Program. Her role is to support family members who look after and support loved ones through their mental health challenges. Catherine's experience stems from supporting and loving her son through a period of trauma in his life when he divulged toxic suicidal ideations to her and his father. From that experience, it has inspired her. Now, she has an amazing and incredibly meaningful job where she knows she can make a difference to families. By sharing her own lived experience, she can tell those she supports that she truly understands what they may be going through.

Sandra Dorse (she/her)

Family Peer Specialist, Infant, Child and Youth Services, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Sandra Dorse is a Family Peer Worker in the Eating Disorders Program in Infant, Child and Youth Services in AMAH. After transitioning from her previous career as a veterinary surgeon and teacher to care for family members facing mental health challenges, she decided to re-enter the workforce in the Eating Disorder Carers sector. She began as a volunteer at the Butterfly Foundation and later accepted a position at the Alfred, where she collaborates with a remarkable multidisciplinary team dedicated to providing the best possible care to families and individuals affected by Eating Disorders. Sandra is married, has two adult daughters, loves her pets, and has a passion for travel.

Sandra Dorse is a Family Peer Worker in the Eating Disorders Program within headspace Early Psychosis Program, run by AMAH.

Anna Gould (she/her)

Consumer Consultant, Quality, Improvement & Safety Team, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Anna Gould is the Consumer Consultant in the Quality, Improvement & Safety Team in AMAH. Formerly as the Consumer Advisor, she was awarded an Alfred Health Recognising Excellence Award for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in 2021. Anna has been providing extensive consultation to government, not for profit, and other health organisations. She is also the Co-Chair of Consumer and Carer Council in Frankston Local, Victoria, a governance role with Wellways Australia. In 2022 Anna completed the VMIAC Consumers in Governance Pilot Program and completed a placement with Neami National's board. From 2017 -2023, she was a member of the Victorian Pride Centre's Community Reference Group. In her daily life, Anna enjoys reading, walking, and whipping up delicious food to share with others.

Kirsty Parsons (she/her)

Consumer Peer Support Worker, St Vincent's Hospital

Kirsty Parsons is a Consumer Peer Support Worker in the Acute Inpatient Service in St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. Kirsty is also involved in the Participation Program at Alfred Mental and Addiction Health as a consumer representative. Her entry into the lived experience workforce began through the Consumer Peer Support Cadetship with AMAH, motivated by her personal experience as a public mental health service user and her engagement with peer workers. Kirsty is dedicated to fostering a mental health system that is safe and trauma-responsive, with a strong focus on consumer rights and safety. In addition to peer support work, she attributes meditation, breath work and mindfulness as significant supports in her recovery journey. She has a keen interest in exploring the connection between spirituality and mental health challenges. Outside of work, Kirsty enjoys reading, watching documentaries and supporting her beloved Sydney Swans team in the Australian Football League.

Part 2: Lived Experience in Action
Facilitators/Presenters

Lucy Mahony (she/her)

Youth Peer Worker, Infant, Child & Youth Services, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Lucy Mahony is a peer support worker in Infant, Child & Youth Services at AMAH. As a Lived Experience Specialist, she is a big fan of storytelling, fun and exploring different ice cream flavours.

Jack Smith (he/him)

Occupational Therapist, headspace Program, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Jack Smith is an Occupational Therapist based in headspace Program, run by AMAH. He is also a Lived Experience Clinician and a great lover of rock climbing.

Rachel Barbara-May (she/her)

Senior Lead Capability and Impact, Infant, Child & Youth Services, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Rachel Barbara-May is the Senior Lead Capability and Impact in Infant, Child & Youth Services at AMAH. As a Social Worker and Dialogical Practitioner, she is a mad footy fan and wildly passionate about transforming the culture of mental health services to be person-led and human rights informed.

Part 3: Reflecting and Looking Ahead
Facilitators/Presenters

Professor Simone Alexander (she/her)

Deputy Chief Executive Officer/ Chief Operating Officer, Alfred Health

Professor Simone Alexander is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer at Alfred Health. Her role is responsible for the management and performance of Alfred Health's clinical operations. As a Registered Nurse by profession, Simone has more than 25 years' experience in the healthcare sector, with extensive clinical background in perioperative nursing and clinical leadership of many areas including The Alfred and Sandringham Hospital's Emergency Departments, ICU, Hyperbaric, Surgical Services, Cardiology, General Medicine, Neurosciences, Hospital in the Home and inpatient wards.

Most recently leading the organisation through the COVID pandemic she has demonstrated the ability to deliver quality innovative healthcare that is agile, flexible and compassionate. Simone offers a strong track record of leading teams, delivering programs, engaging stakeholders and influencing productive outcomes for organisations while ensuring quality of care.

Sandra Keppich-Arnold (she/her)

Program Director, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Sandra Keppich-Arnold is Director of Operations in Mental & Addiction Health at Alfred Health, overseeing the operational management of allied health, nursing, and administration teams across AMAH. She is a registered and credentialled psychiatric nurse, with extensive leadership experience in nursing, adult mental health, aged psychiatry and residential services. Sandra has led initiatives to improve management of complex behavioural presentations in hospital settings and enhancing consultation liaison nursing models.

Sandra holds an honorary appointment as Adjunct Professor in the School of Nursing & Midwifery at Deakin University. With research experience in family and consumer experiences, clinical handover of risk, and triage competencies, she has also participated in reviews of nursing and mental health programs across various jurisdictions. Sandra's interests include amplifying the voices of consumer and carer/ family in service improvement, promoting positive workforce culture changes, and embedding education into workforce frameworks.

Part 3: Reflecting and Looking Ahead
Facilitators/Presenters

Associate Professor Simon Stafrace (he/him)

Program Director, Alfred Mental & Addiction Health

Associate Professor Simon Stafrace is the Program Director of Mental & Addiction Health at Alfred Health, overseeing mental health and addiction services provided by Alfred Health, exclusively or in partnership with non-government and community health organisations, across parts of the southern metropolitan region. Having obtained postgraduate academic qualifications in psychological medicine, clinical hypnosis and health administration, he holds an honorary appointment as Clinical Adjunct Associate Professor at Monash University.

Simon is the Chair of the Community Collaboration Committee of the Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) and sees it focal to bring the voices of lived and living experience to the policy, education and advocacy work of the College. Having recently served as the Chief Adviser to the Victorian Department of Health from 2020-2022, he played a pivotal role in contributing to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System as well as in the early implementation of its recommendations, and establishment of Mental Health Reform Victoria and the Division of Mental Health & Wellbeing.