

# Position Description

## Lived Experience Grade 3

<b>Classification:</b>	Consumer Lived Experience Grade 3
<b>Business unit/department:</b>	Acute Psychiatric Unit
<b>Work location:</b>	Austin Hospital <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)
<b>Agreement:</b>	Victorian Public Mental Health Services Enterprise Agreement 2020-2024
<b>Employment type:</b>	Part-Time
<b>Hours per week:</b>	32
<b>Reports to:</b>	Nurse Unit Manager
<b>Direct reports:</b>	N/A
<b>Financial management:</b>	NIL
<b>Date:</b>	December 2025

### Position purpose

The **Consumer Peer Worker** is a lived and living experience role within the Acute Psychiatric Unit (APU) supporting consumers living with **mental health and/or alcohol and other drug (AOD) challenges**. Drawing on their **personal experience** of living with emotional dysregulation, mental health, and/or AOD challenges, the Consumer Peer Worker provides holistic, strength-based, and sustained support to consumers, families, partners, and carers.

Consumers admitted for inpatient care are often doing so at a time of **acute distress, uncertainty, and disconnection**. When substance use is also part of the picture, consumers may experience **additional stigma, shame, or exclusion** from treatment planning. The Consumer Peer Worker provides **non-judgmental, trauma-informed, and recovery-focused support**, helping consumers feel heard, respected, and included.

Working alongside clinicians and other team members, the Consumer Peer Worker provides **1:1 peer support, facilitates group sessions, and offers referrals to relevant support services where appropriate**. They support inclusive communication between consumers and the treating team and promote recognition of consumers and carers as **key partners** in recovery, especially during admission, care planning, and discharge.

By sharing insights from lived experiences, the Consumer Peer Worker helps the service be more **responsive to the layered experiences** of families affected by both mental health and AOD issues. The role fosters a culture of inclusion, empathy, and **stigma reduction**, improving consumer engagement, and supporting smoother transitions between acute and community care.

## About the Directorate/Division/Department

The Mental Health Division provides care and services through a comprehensive range of teams to meet the needs of mental health consumers and carers throughout Victoria. Services are located across Austin Health campuses and in the community.

All mental health services work within a clinical framework that promotes recovery-oriented practice and supported decision making. This approach to client wellbeing builds on the strengths of the individual working in partnership with their treating team. It encompasses the principles of self-determination and individualised treatment and care.

The Acute Psychiatric Unit incorporates 2 mental health programs.

Adult Acute Program (AAP) has 19 beds which provide inpatient services to people over 18 years of age who have an acute psychiatric disorder requiring specialist intervention for assessment and treatment. The Unit has a strong integration with mental health community-based services supporting continuity of recovery-focused care.

Eating Disorder Program -This program provides five inpatient beds for consumers with an eating disorder, who require an acute health restoration program due to medical risk because of the severity of their eating problems.

## Position responsibilities

### Working for consumers and supporting families, carers and supporters

- Providing empathetic and informed peer support to consumers whose lives are impacted by mental health and/or substance use challenges, being mindful of the principles of purposeful disclosure.
- Supporting consumers to discover their own solutions and empowering them to take ownership of the journey.
- Encouraging and facilitating referrals to internal and external services, support groups and education, where appropriate.
- Effective communication skills and the ability to engage with consumers, families, carers, and supporters in everyday, non-clinical language.

### Networking and Collaboration

- Working closely with team members to provide an accessible and welcoming service for consumers, families, carers, and supporters.
- Actively participating and working within multidisciplinary teams, collaborative partner organizations with other stakeholders.
- Support education of clinical team members about the distinct roles, values, and boundaries of Consumer Peer Work to promote shared understanding and effective collaboration.
- Developing and maintaining appropriate networks and resources to enable the referral of consumers to broader community services.
- Representing APU on relevant networks and committees as required in a professional and respectful manner.
- Encouraging and facilitating referrals to internal and external services, where appropriate.
- Participating in regular peer-to-peer learning through communities of practice.



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## Group Facilitation and Support

- Working as part of a team to guide the group according to the principles agreed upon by group participants and/or other stakeholders.
- Being committed to and abiding by the Austin Health privacy and confidentiality policy applicable to all staff.
- Providing a supportive environment for members to participate, learn, and share in a group setting.
- Attending all group meetings as an authentic and active participant, mindful of the principles of purposeful disclosure.
- Ensuring the focus of the group is supporting the needs of the participants. Participating in evaluation, identifying gaps in content, and/or updating group materials for continuous improvement.
- Providing support for various administration duties, which may include maintaining records of group attendance and current group membership, communicating with members from time to time, organizing group rosters, preparing meeting topic planners, etc.
- Regularly attending meetings and committing to ongoing professional development and training.

## Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

- Encouraging consumer feedback to the service and implementing continuous improvement initiatives with the team.
- A commitment to ensuring safe, best-practice care that puts consumers and carers at the heart of the decision-making process.
- Ensuring the data collection and reporting requirements are complete to a high standard and in a timely manner.

## Supervision, Professional Development and Wellbeing

- Participating in regular self-reflection, group, and operational (line management) supervision and professional development in line with individual work plan, as directed by the Team Leader and Consumer Discipline Lead.
- Participating in regular consumer perspective supervision including self-reflective practice and identification of needs.
- Seeking support and debriefing and actively following up challenging or concerning issues with the manager/team leader. Informing senior staff members or managers when duty of care issues arises.
- Willingness to participate in ongoing training related to the role.
- Demonstrates a strong self-awareness of personal triggers and the ability to effectively self-regulate in challenging situations, ensuring a calm and supportive environment for families, carers, and supporters.



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## Selection Criteria

### Essential skills and experience:

1. Lived Experience and Peer Support:
  - Lived and/or living experience of a diagnosed mental illness and an understanding of navigating the Victorian public mental health system due to emotional dysregulation, mental health and/or AoD challenges.
  - Recognition and understanding of personal experiences in crises as a consumer, with the ability to use these experiences to provide empathetic and hope-inspiring support to others.
  - Knowledge of consumer peer support principles, committed to providing support from a mutual perspective, sharing lived experiences to foster hope and empowerment.
  - Ability to use a lived experience family/carer perspective to collaborate effectively with staff and instill hope and belief in recovery.
2. Professional Experience:
  - **Minimum of 2 years' experience** working in a consumer peer position or equivalent role.
  - Demonstrates a deep understanding of the nuances of working within clinical mental health services, including the dynamics between clinical and lived/living experience perspectives, and shows the ability to navigate these environments with confidence, empathy, and professionalism.
3. System Knowledge and Recovery Approach:
  - A strong understanding of the Victorian public mental health system, including contemporary trends and issues from a lived experience viewpoint.
  - A deep understanding of relational recovery and the ability to work from a tripartite approach (consumer, carer, and clinician collaboration).
  - Understanding and application of the strengths-based model of recovery.
  - Sound knowledge of the relevant legislation (including Mental Health and wellbeing Act, Office of the Chief Psychiatrist Guidelines) and frameworks for recovery-oriented practice pertaining to working in mental health and with consumers and their families, carers and supporters.
4. Empathy, Diversity, and Cultural Sensitivity:
  - Demonstrated understanding of and empathy for the broad impact of mental illness on consumers, carers, and families.
  - Awareness of the need to be sensitive to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
5. Communication and Interpersonal Skills:
  - Sound communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to develop and maintain effective working relationships with consumers, families/carers, colleagues, clinical staff, and other health and welfare services.
  - Ability to work collaboratively within a multidisciplinary team, including expressing own viewpoints respectfully and valuing the perspectives of others.
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6. Professionalism and Work Practices:
  - Ability to manage time and resources effectively in a challenging and dynamic environment.



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- Basic proficiency in computer skills to support documentation and communication requirements.

## Professional qualifications and registration requirements

### Essentials:

- Completion of Intentional Peer Support (IPS) training.
- Completion of, or working towards, Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work or similar qualification.
- Single Session Peer Work (SSPW) - Willingness to obtain within a year of joining.

### Desirable but not essential:

- Lived & Living Experience Peer Support Cadetship Program.
- Certificate IV in mental health, peer work, welfare or community development, or equivalent.
- Relevant Qualification in child and family, or health care.

## Quality, safety and risk – all roles

All Austin Health employees are required to:

- Maintain a safe working environment for yourself, colleagues and members of the public by following organisational safety, quality and risk policies and guidelines.
- Escalate concerns regarding safety, quality and risk to the appropriate staff member, if unable to rectify yourself.
- Promote and participate in the evaluation and continuous improvement processes.
- Comply with the principles of person-centered care.
- Comply with requirements of National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards and other relevant regulatory requirements.

## Other conditions – all roles

All Austin Health employees are required to:

- Adhere to Austin Health's core values: *our actions show we care, we bring our best, together we achieve, and we shape the future.*
- Comply with the Austin Health's Code of Conduct policy, as well as all other policies and procedures (as amended from time to time).
- Comply with all Austin Health mandatory training and continuing professional development requirements.
- Provide proof of immunity to nominated vaccine preventable diseases in accordance with Austin Health's immunisation screening policy.
- Work across multiple sites as per work requirements and/or directed by management.

## General information



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### **Cultural safety**

Austin Health is committed to cultural safety and health equity for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People. We recognise cultural safety as the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. It empowers people and enables them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.

### **Equal Opportunity Employer**

We celebrate, value, and include people of all backgrounds, genders, identities, cultures, bodies, and abilities. We welcome and support applications from talented people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, people with disability, neurodiverse people, LGBTQIA+ and people of all ages and cultures.

### **Austin Health is a child safe environment**

We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. Austin Health has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and commits to protect children. We take allegations of abuse and neglect seriously and will make every effort to mitigate and respond to risk in line with hospital policy and procedures.



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