

Media Release

The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Treaty and First Peoples



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BOLSTERING OUR MENTAL HEALTH LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKFORCE

The Andrews Labor Government is building a robust lived and living experience mental health workforce, as the first cohort of Victoria's Peer Cadet Program begins to secure jobs across the state.

Minister for Mental Health Gabrielle Williams today attended the graduation ceremony of the first 24 students who completed the program – which provides a paid employment opportunity while students complete a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

The Labor Government's Peer Cadet Program commenced in 2022 with a \$1.3 million investment, commissioned across six mental health community support services: Neami National, Mind Australia, EACH, Uniting Victoria Tasmania, cohealth and Wellways.

The program provides an opportunity for people with lived and living experience to develop knowledge, skills, and confidence in a structured and supported environment while receiving supervision, training and reflective practice opportunities that are discipline-specific.

Following a successful first round, the Labor Government has invested more than \$600,000 to expand the program to another three services – Ballarat Community Health, Eating Disorders Victoria and ermha365). The 2023 program will support nine organisations to host 45 individuals to become peer cadets across community services.

The Peer Cadet Program responds to the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System's* recommendation to increase the number of entry points into the lived and living experience workforce and provide a supportive and structured environment for learning.

The Government has invested more than \$50 million since 2020 to build the required supports, structures and career pathways for the lived and living experience workforces – ensuring a solid foundation as we build the mental health system from the ground up.

This includes \$11.45 million for the *Lived and Living Experience Workforce Development program*, which will see more than 60 projects roll out over two years offering training, supervision, practice supports, organisational supports, education and career pathways.

Further boosting pathways into the workforce for people with lived experience, the government's allocated \$215,000 for 19 university scholarships in 2023, while the *Leadership Development Grants program* is offering up to \$5,000 for lived experience workers to take up leadership training, with 40 workers offered grants in 2023.

In the two years since the Royal Commission's final report was delivered, new services have opened and more Victorians than ever are getting the help they need, with work underway on more than 90 per cent of the recommendations.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Gabrielle Williams

"I'm so proud of our Peer Cadets graduating today, whose knowledge and experience means they can begin working in community mental health services right away to help Victorians living with mental illness."

"We're not only delivering a huge pipeline of skilled mental health workers, but also supporting them throughout their careers, for a sustainable, lived experience-led workforce."

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