



The Royal  
Australian &  
New Zealand  
College of  
Psychiatrists



Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care  
**National Consumer Engagement Strategy for Health and Wellbeing (NCESHW)**

September 2023

# Advocacy to improve access and equity

# Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists submission

## Have your say on the National Consumer Engagement Strategy for Health and Wellbeing (NCESHW)

### **About the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)**

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists in Australia and New Zealand. The RANZCP has more than 8000 members, including around 5800 qualified psychiatrists. The RANZCP is the peak body representing psychiatrists in Australia and New Zealand and as a bi-national college has strong ties with associations in the Asia-Pacific region.

### **Introduction**

The RANZCP welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care's (DoHAC) National Consumer Engagement Strategy for Health and Wellbeing (the Strategy). The RANZCP supports the aim of the Strategy to support and strengthen partnerships that are equitable and effective and to build trust between consumers and policy-makers in all policy areas relevant to health. Detailed in our [strategic plan](#) (2022-25), the RANZCP is committed to developing and maintain effective and equitable partnerships with consumers to ensure that our policies provide the best outcomes for everyone.

The RANZCP recognises the importance of collaborating with people with a lived and living experience of a mental health condition. This includes consumers, carers and whanau as well as clinicians with lived experience. The RANZCP has long established community committees - Community Collaboration Committee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Committee and Te Kaunihera. These committees are comprised of community members with direct experience of a mental health condition and supported by psychiatrists who have or are working in these areas.

The RANZCP's response (below) was inputted via an online survey and was based on consultation with the above committees as well as other relevant committees including the Committee for Professional Practice, the Section of Private Practice Psychiatry Committee and the Section of Leadership and Management Committee.

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## Survey responses

1. What is your name?

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

2. What is your email address?

[policy@ranzcp.org](mailto:policy@ranzcp.org)

4. Are you a policy-maker?

In the context of this Strategy, policy-makers are recognised as those involved in informing, designing and developing policy – both individuals and organisations across government and non-government settings.

(Required)

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

3. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation, or as a consumer/individual?

(Required)

- On behalf of an organisation
- On behalf of a section/team within an organisation
- A consumer or individual
- Unsure

5. What is your organisation and/or field of expertise?

Psychiatry

**6. If representing an organisation, which sector does your organisation belong to?**

- State or Territory Government Department/Agency
- Commonwealth Government Department/Agency
- Local Council
- Primary Health Network
- Local Health District
- First Nations/Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Org
- Professional body/Peak organisation
- University/Education/Research Institution
- Health service delivery organisation
- Not-for-profit/Community organisation
- Industry/Business
- I am a consumer/individual
- Other: Please specify

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## Consultation Questions

These questions relate to the draft National Consumer Engagement Strategy for Health and Wellbeing that can be found at the bottom of the homepage of this consultation, under the 'Related' heading. The questions are related to engaging consumers to be involved in policy-making

### 7. Purpose

(Required)      Not at all clear      Not clear      Unsure      Clear      Very clear

Is the purpose of the strategy and/or the target audience clear?

                      

If not, what would make it clearer?

### 8. Objectives

(Required)      Not at all clear      Not clear      Unsure      Clear      Very clear

Are the objectives for the Strategy clear and appropriate ?

                      

If not, what is missing?

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## 9. Fundamentals

(Required)      Not at all clear      Not clear      Unsure      Clear      Very clear

Do the Fundamentals capture what you see as essential for consumer engagement?

                      

If not, what is missing?

People with lived experience provide essential insight about how psychiatry care and services might be improved to become more equitable. Co-design and co-production help to reduce the misunderstanding and stigma that can be built into health systems and ensures that policies are produced with and not for consumers. A collaborative approach where established and long-term relationships are the best ways to facilitate engagement. Partnership between policymakers and community members should be fostered. The partnership model places the person who is experiencing a mental health condition at the centre and considers their experience as recognised and valued.

Across the RANZCP, lived experience voices are further incorporated into policy development in a broad range of practice areas. One addition which would improve the focus on inclusivity and transparency is the inclusion of a best practice regarding remuneration. The reliance on *pro bono* work is a barrier to consumer engagement as it reduces the role of lived experience to those who can afford to give away their time for free. People with a mental health condition, and their carers are some of the most vulnerable groups in our society including socioeconomically. Reducing barriers to participation will increase the level of equity and inclusivity for people with lived experience. The involvement of those with a lived experience with the RANZCP is essential to improving the profile, mental health and understanding of individuals and communities across Australia.

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## 10. Good Practice Guidelines

(Required)      Not at all      Very little      Unsure      Well      Very Well

Do you think the Guidelines describe what is needed to help policy-makers work effectively with consumers?

                      

(Required)      Not at all useful      Useful      Unsure      Clear      Very clearly explained

Are the Guidelines explained in a way that makes them useful?

                      

Do you have anything to add about the Guidelines?

The RANZCP strongly supports the message of the Good Practice Guidelines of collaboration, partnership and two-way information sharing. Partnership involves respectful and collaborative dialogue between consumers, carers and clinicians. The starting point for all aspects of this partnership is open and transparent conversation, as this creates a partnership between policymakers and people with lived experience. This partnership is underpinned by a recognition that all share the common goal of achieving social and emotional wellbeing for individuals and their communities. This model of engagement also recognises individual human rights, including the right to self-determination throughout any care and treatment discussions.

A partnership approach which emphasises a holistic person-centred care model also encourages participation from people with lived and living experience. Misunderstanding and stigma affect people with mental health conditions in the wider community so producing a welcoming and equitable partnership for engagement helps to overcome individual and community hesitation. Actively seeking to include to recruit individuals who represent a lived experience perspective, and who may hold critical opinions of their experience of psychiatry is important. When engaging with community members it is important to

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acknowledge and recognise both positive and negative experiences allowing for reinforcement of good practices and suggestions to improve practices deemed to be harmful for those needing psychiatric care. In order to best realise the above goals, the RANZCP strongly affirms the importance of open and transparent lived experience engagement, whereby the perspectives, diverse needs, concerns and the values of communities are incorporated into guidelines and recommendations. Importantly at the outset of projects, the RANZCP affirms the value of clearly communicating the scope of involvement and expectations of committee members and others with a lived experience, explaining where their participation fits on the continuum of engagement (from seeking feedback through to co-production).

One area that the Good Practice guidelines would benefit from highlighting is the importance of lived experience and listening to feedback regarding the advocacy that emerges from and because of policymaking. Through working with people with lived experience, the RANZCP aims to embed its advocacy towards improvements to service delivery in the lived experience of those we serve, as well as the body of clinical knowledge and expertise of the profession.

#### **11. If you have been involved in policy-making before as a consumer, what made your engagement in that process**

A positive and welcome experience

n/a

A dissatisfying experience

n/a



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### 12. HELP Toolkit

(Required)      Not at all      Very little      Unsure      Easy      Very easy

Do you think the Toolkit will be easy to use?

                      

(Required)      Not at all      Very little      Unsure      Helpful      Very helpful

Do you think the Toolkit will help policy-makers better engage consumers in policy-making?

                      

Do you have anything else to add?

The RANZCP supports the use of the HELP Toolkit. We believe that community collaboration is important as evidenced by our Community Collaboration Committee (CCC) which seeks to promote partnership with people with lived experience of mental illness (also referred to as consumers) and carers. In addition to the CCC, the RANZCP is also committed to focus engaging with consumers of health care through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Committee.

The RANZCP Position Statement, Mental Health for the community highlights need for community collaboration through person-centred care and involving the voices of the community. The toolkit aligns with our approach to support partnerships and build trust between consumers and policymakers in a manner that is purposeful, inclusive, respectful, transparent, and collaborative.

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### 13. Are you supportive of the overall purpose and objectives of the Strategy?

(Required)

- Yes
- Yes, with proposed changes
- No, with proposed changes

Please specify proposed changes

n/a

### 14. If you are a consumer and haven't been involved in policy making, would you like to be? Why/Why not?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If you have wanted to be involved, what has stopped you from doing so?

n/a

### 15. Are there any other engagement approaches that you have found helpful and effective?

As previously highlighted, the RANZCP believes in the importance of a strong commitment to collaboration with consumers through genuine partnerships that are respectful and purposeful. This includes remuneration which recognises the value of these collaborative partnerships.

The RANZCP is committed to collaboration with organisations that are consumer-led which champion the voices of lived experience from the consumer perspective and seek to elevate these voices through ongoing partnerships in an effort to improve access and equity to promote mental health as we seek to incorporate a patient centred approach. The RANZCP has published position statements to outline the

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importance of consulting with lived and living experience in mental health care; [Partnering with people with a lived experience](#) and [Partnering with carers in mental healthcare](#). The RANZCP is also a signatory to [Equally Well](#) which espouses the needs for a holistic and person centred approach to mental health care.

The RANZCP supports the National Consumer Engagement Strategy for Health and Wellbeing as a means to continue to promote consumer and community participation in all aspects of health program delivery including health policy and health program design.

#### 16. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

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