

# MC6 Embedding lived experience in policy – challenges and opportunities

Dr Sonia Masciantonio SYC & Duncan Bainbridge, Lived Experience Reference Group

Skye Constantine, University of Queensland & Christine Thirkell

PJ Humphreys Sunshine Coast Council & Ian Campbell, Street Up

Alan Earls & Charmaine Jones Public Interest Advocacy Centre

# MC6 Embedding lived experience in policy – challenges and opportunities

Dr Sonia Masciantonio SYC & Duncan Bainbridge, Lived Experience Reference Group

sync

so you can

# Navigating a cultural shift



Embedding Lived Experience into SA's  
Housing and Homelessness Reform

Sonia Masciantonio  
Lived Experience  
Engagement Service

Duncan Bainbridge  
Lived Experience  
Reference Group

# Embarking on the journey

2020 - South Australian Housing Trust announced the 2020-2030 reform of the housing and homelessness system.

Lived Experience Engagement Service (LEES) commissioned as part of the reform

- Embed lived experience across SA's housing and homelessness sector



# Mapping new terrain

Co-design of the lived experience framework

- Lived experience of homelessness
- SA's Specialist Homelessness Services (Alliances and Directly Contracted Services)
- SA Housing Authority (now SA Housing Trust)

The Framework intends to guide the reform of housing and homelessness services in South Australia by embedding lived experience into policy, service design and delivery.



Lived Experience Framework  
SA's Housings & Homelessness System





# Lived Experience knowledge as the beacon

- Lived Experience Reference Group (LERG) “System Advisors”
- Discussion papers
- Lived experience projects
- Speaking at events
- Lived experience representative of a State-wide Homelessness Strategic Group (SHSG)
- Need diversity of people with lived experience to be involved



# Navigating uncharted waters

Not without challenges:

- Learning as we go (test, fail, adapt)
- Working with a stretched sector
- Resourcing and budgets
- Finding people with lived experience who want to participate

# Shifting the balance of power in decision making



**Informed  
decision making  
to us**



**Consultative  
decision making  
for us without us**



**Participatory  
decision making  
nothing about us  
without us**



**Self-determined  
decision making  
by us for us**



Fits easier with  
business as usual



Requires a bigger  
shift in practice

More likely to lead to  
incremental solutions  
based on existing  
assumptions



More likely to lead to  
different solutions based  
on shifted assumptions



# Anchoring change is our collective responsibility

- Lived Experience participation in:
  - service design,
  - policy development,
  - reform activities
- Lived Experience leadership – shifts the balance in power in decision making.
- Designated Lived Experience employment and inclusive workplaces



[syc.net.au](https://syc.net.au)

# MC6 Embedding lived experience in policy – challenges and opportunities

Skye Constantine, University of Queensland & Christine Thirkell

# You can't ask that: lived and living experiences informing homelessness practice and policy

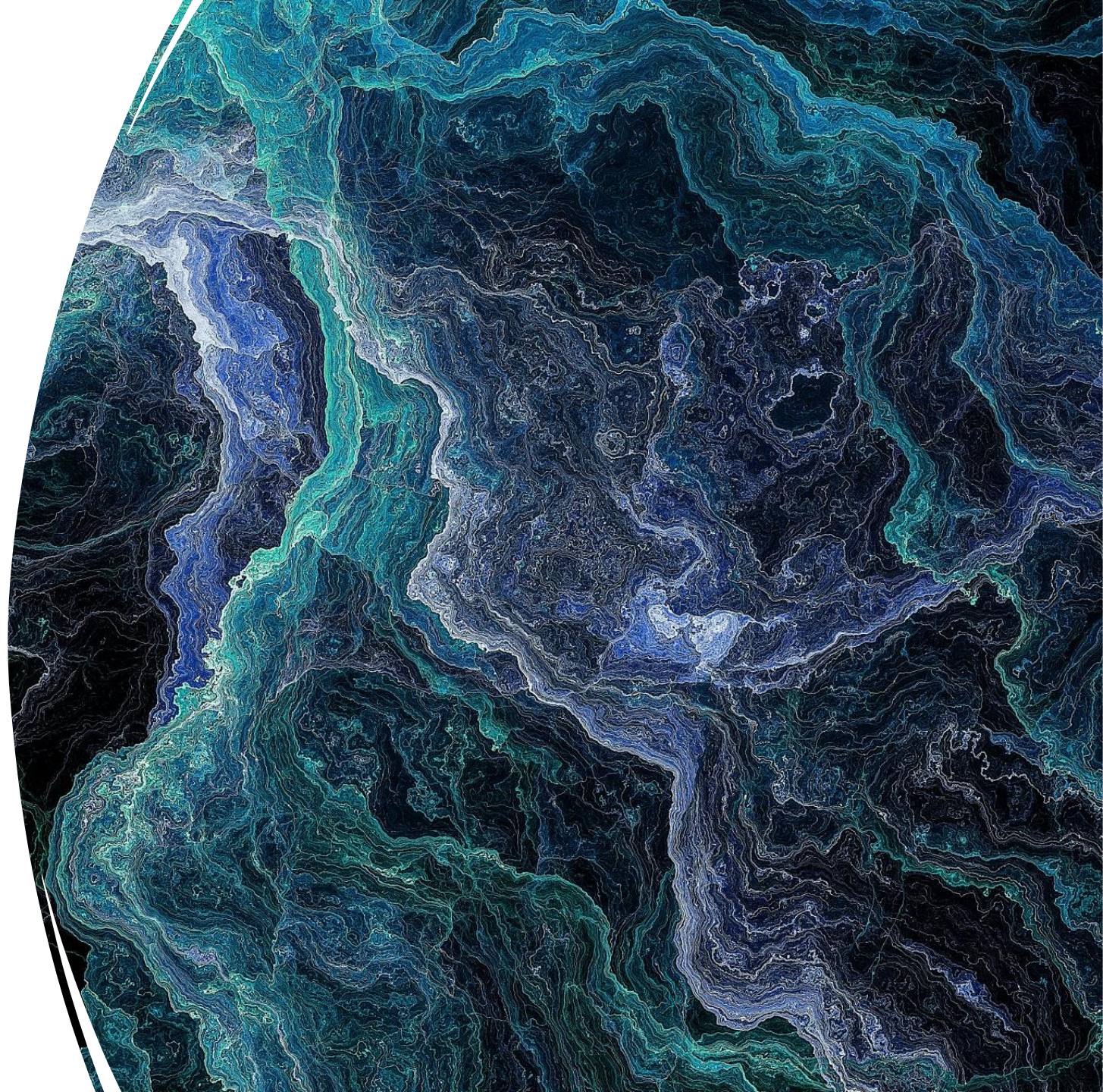
---

Christine Thirkell, Lived Experience Expert

Skye Constantine, University of Queensland

MAJOR CONCURRENT 6: Embedding Lived  
Experience in policy – challenges and  
opportunities

AHURI: Australian Homelessness  
Conference 2024



# Acknowledgments

---

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters, and communities. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

---

We also acknowledge that issues of homelessness and home are not experienced evenly. We acknowledge that First Nations persons are more at risk of homelessness in Australia, along with the additional losses of home as a result of displacement from country and other acts of colonisation.

---

We also acknowledge the various lived and living experiences of the people present here today. Issues of inequality are widespread, but their consequences fall more heavily on some than others.

# Christine: Who am I?

## What is my experience of homelessness issues?

Experiences of being  
homeless with a young  
child

Due to my experience  
of homelessness, I  
became interested in  
advocacy

Joined the Peer  
Education and Support  
Program (PESP) at  
Council to Homeless  
Persons in 2016

Became interested in  
research to better  
understand how lived  
experience is  
perceived and used

# Skye: Who am I?

## What is my experience of homelessness issues?

Brief experiences of homelessness during childhood and young adulthood

No experience of accessing services for homelessness issues

Almost 20 years of working in homelessness and housing services

Started research because I had big questions about why we do what we do, and what could be done better

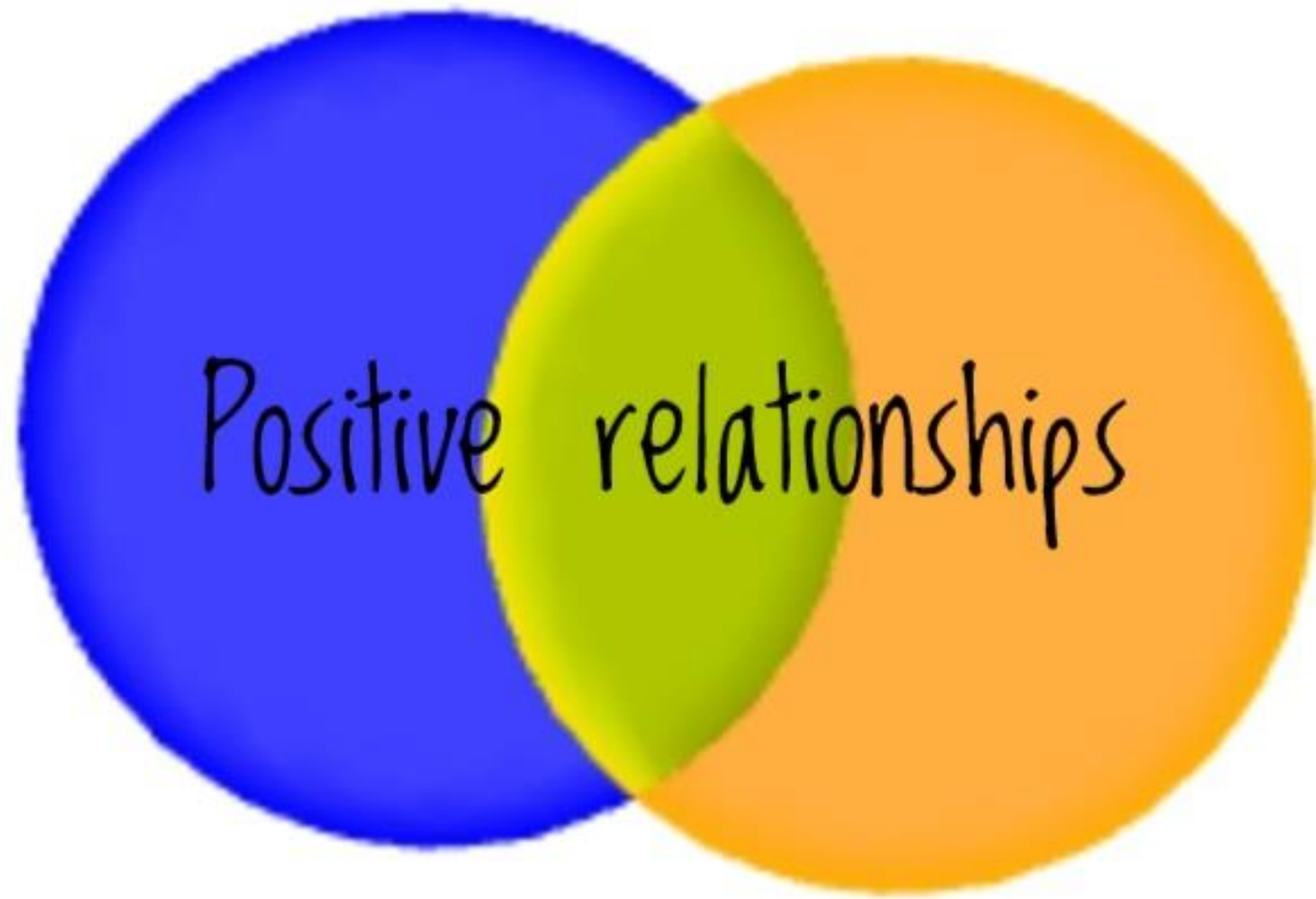
We Need A Better  
tion than moving us ON!  
to ~~NOWHERE~~  
THE NEXT

oot path

~~AIN'T~~ A HOME

Elizabeth

Graffiti on Elizabeth St,  
Melbourne. Photo 2023



# MC6 Embedding lived experience in policy – challenges and opportunities

PJ Humphreys Sunshine Coast Council & Ian Campbell, Street Up

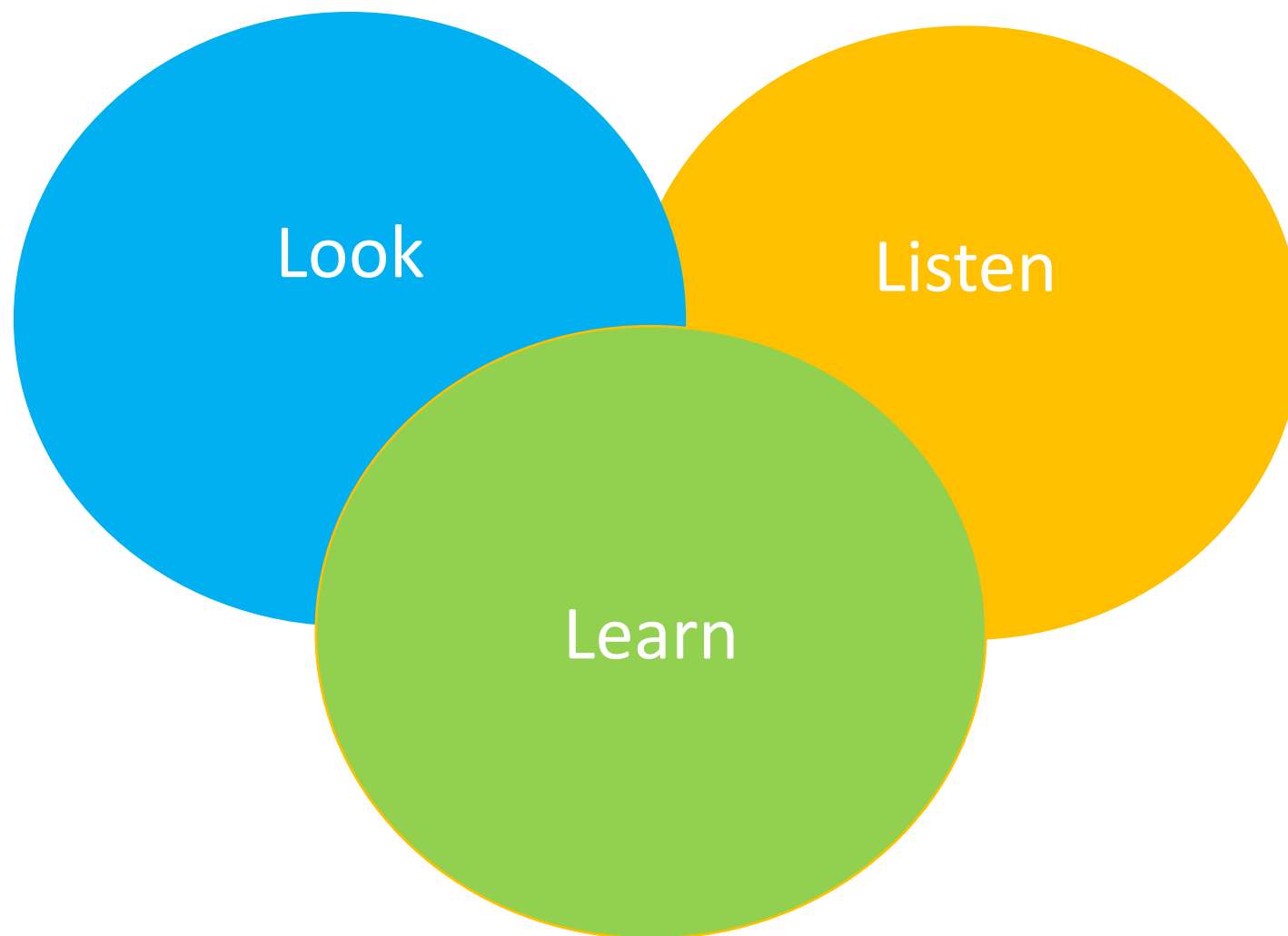
# Lived Experience Inclusion at the *heart* of Local Government Responses to Homelessness

PJ Humphreys: Community Development Officer, Sunshine Coast Council

Ian Campbell: Co-founder, Street Up

# Who are we?

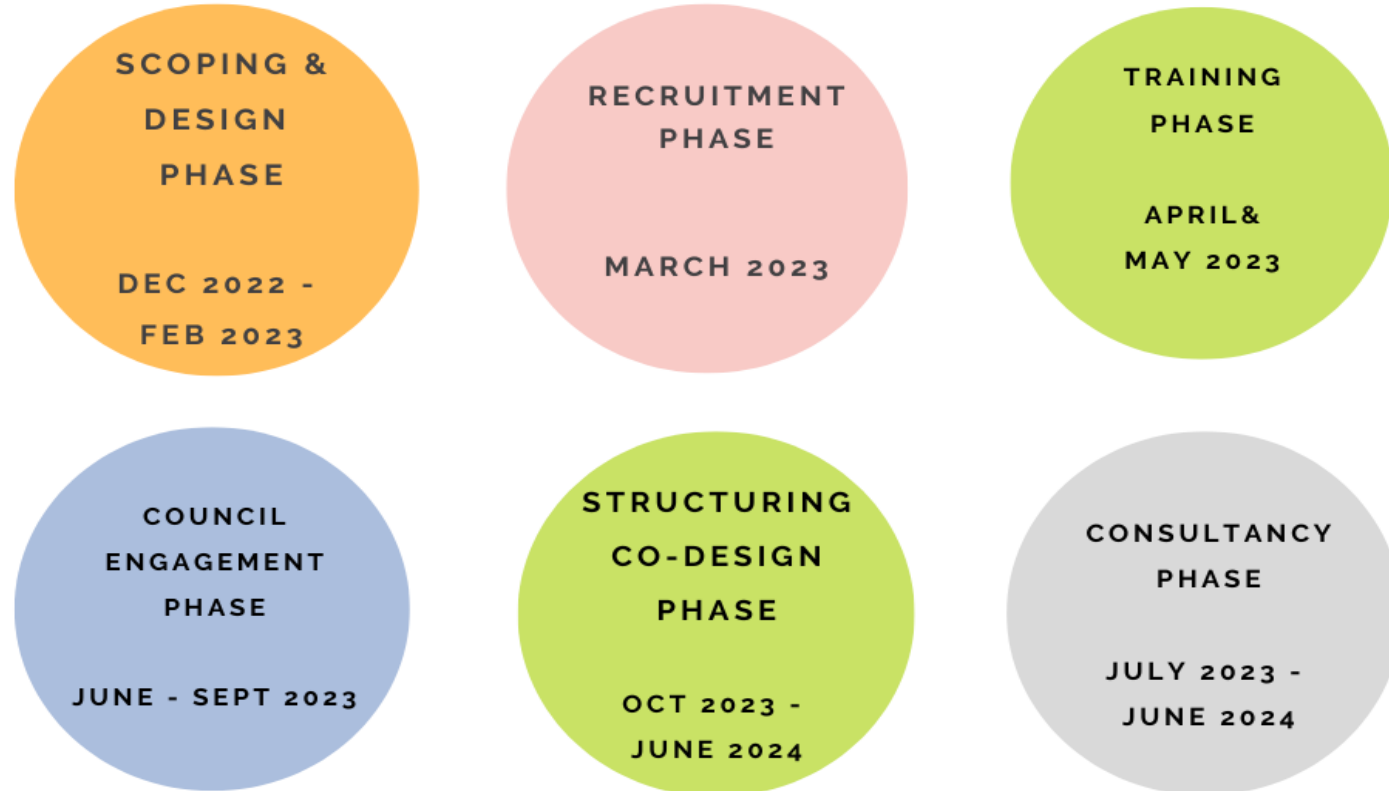
- Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Country
- Sunshine Coast is 100klm north of Brisbane
- Region size is 2254 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population – 356,000
- Homelessness has increased 54% since 2016



# Enabling Factors



# Pilot: Lived Experience Inclusion Project



# Structuring Phase: Street Up Co-Design Team



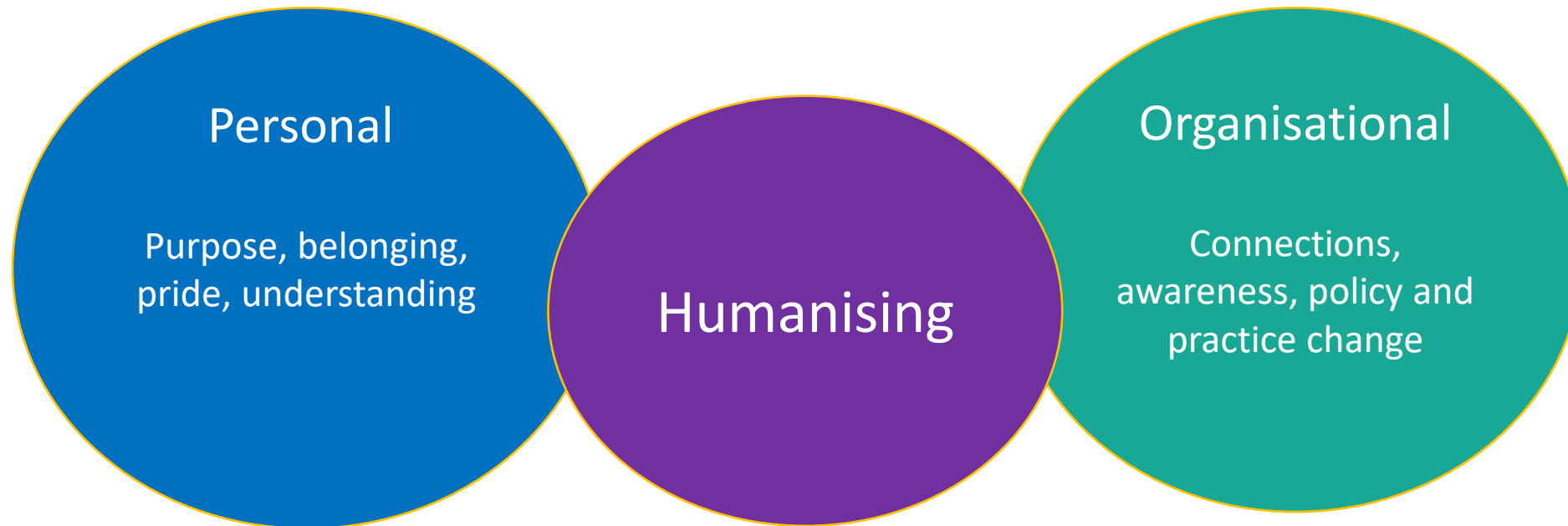
Caloundra  
Community  
Centre



# Engagements

- Homelessness Awareness Training
- Community Strategy Action Plan Review
- Housing & Homelessness Action Plan
- Resource material development

# Outcomes



# Research

*Hearing the participants talk about their experience and how they go to where they are now was a real eye opener and something that I will never forget*

*There is enormous value in connecting people with lived experiences into discussions and work that seek to change or adjust system level responses or understanding*

*Recalibrate our focus....we made immediate changes to our service based on our new understanding of the details that matter to a person experiencing homelessness*

*Developed a conversation guide around starting a conversation on housing and homelessness with staff*

*We are now on a journey of improvement that has been strategically led by our engagement with the lived experience group*

# Success Factors

- Educational Support
  - Training course
  - Ongoing professional development
- Emotional Support
  - Trauma informed/Social Worker
- Financial Support
  - Paid participation payment

# Key takeaway – ‘nothing for us without us’



[www.streetup.com.au](http://www.streetup.com.au)  
[info@streetup.com.au](mailto:info@streetup.com.au)

[pj.humphreys@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au](mailto:pj.humphreys@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au)  
0499 712 810

# MC6 Embedding lived experience in policy – challenges and opportunities

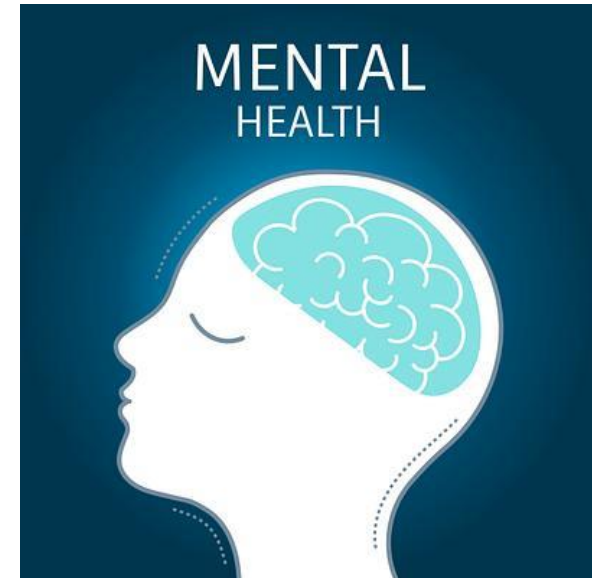
Alan Earls & Charmaine Jones Public Interest Advocacy Centre

# Housing and Mental Health Agreement Lived Experience Committee

August 2024

Charmaine Jones – the Justice and Equity Centre  
[cjones@jec.org.au](mailto:cjones@jec.org.au)

Alan Earls – Lived Experience Advocate  
[alanmacaniarla@gmail.com](mailto:alanmacaniarla@gmail.com)



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC

## HMHA Principles

1. **Empowering and respecting the rights of people with lived experience**, including the right to participate in decisions about their care, to decline services and to respect their confidentiality and privacy in accordance with relevant laws.
2. **Adopting a trauma-informed approach** through actions that promote safety, choice, collaboration and empowerment to build trust.
3. **Placing the person at the centre of services** so that a high standard of care is achieved for each individual.
4. **Adopting a holistic approach** to consider physical, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing and provide culturally responsive services.
5. **Respecting differences between and across the signatory agencies** at all levels of governance, including differing structures, priorities and constraints. Staff are listened to as the experts in their own field.
6. **Involving people with lived experience, their families, carers and kinship at all levels of service delivery and policy development.**
7. **Sharing information** between services to facilitate individual client outcomes

a quiet  
carriage



Cock











# MC6 Embedding lived experience in policy – challenges and opportunities

Dr Sonia Masciantonio SYC & Duncan Bainbridge, Lived Experience Reference Group

Skye Constantine, University of Queensland & Christine Thirkell

PJ Humphreys Sunshine Coast Council & Ian Campbell, Street Up

Alan Earls & Charmaine Jones Public Interest Advocacy Centre

# Australian Homelessness Conference 2024

*Gathering Momentum*



Government of  
South Australia