

11th of August, 2011

Peers Australia is an initiative of Peer Workers who are seeking to establish a national Peer Worker Association with the vision to promoting Peer Work and quality peer work practice in Australian mental health services.

To this end the group has already coordinated a national consultation process where more than 100 peer workers, policy developers, clinicians and service managers participated in an online survey which sought opinions relating to draft objectives of an association.

Following this activity we are seeking to once again consult with the sector and we are requesting the support of your organisation to distribute information to the sector, and to promote the second consultation survey. Most importantly we ask that you might include information about this initiative in electronic and hard copy bulletins or notices sent out to stakeholders, especially electronic distribution of the online survey link.

The survey can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2QWDLKH>

The consultation period will be open from 11th of August until August 31st, 2011. Final results of the consultation process and a decision as to whether or not to proceed with forming Peers Australia will be undertaken during a workshop at TheMHS (<http://www.themhs.org.au/>) in Adelaide on September 8th, 2011.

Documents attached with this letter are:

- the draft constitution
- the initial survey report
- an outline of the TheMHS workshop
- a hard copy of the survey (this is provided for information only, surveys will be completed online)

Sincerely,

Geoff Phillips & Charmaine Gallagher

Peers Australia

peers@peersaustralia.org.au

RULES OF ASSOCIATION
PEERS AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

1. PREFACE

- 1.1. The name of the Incorporated Association shall be PEERS AUSTRALIA Inc.
- 1.2. These rules of association bind the Association and every Member to the same extent as if they had respectively signed and agreed to be bound by all the provisions thereof.

2. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 2.1. In these rules of association the following definitions apply:
 - 2.1.1. "Act" means the Associations Incorporation Act 1985 (SA).
 - 2.1.2. "Association" means PEERS AUSTRALIA Inc.
 - 2.1.3. "Board" means the board of the Association as duly constituted under these Rules.
 - 2.1.4. "Executive Committee" means a sub-committee of the Board appointed and directed by the Board to make administrative decisions between Board meetings.
 - 2.1.5. "Eligible Charity" means a fund, authority or institution which has similar objects to the Association and to which income tax deductible gifts can be made under Division 30 of ITAA.
 - 2.1.6. "Financial year" means the period of twelve months ending on the thirtieth day of June in each and every year.
 - 2.1.7. "ITAA" means the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.
 - 2.1.8. "Lived Experience" means living with the experience of mental illness.
 - 2.1.9. "Member" means a financial member of the Association.
 - 2.1.10. "Peer Worker or Peer" means a person who, working collaboratively with a person who is experiencing mental illness, intentionally uses their own personal Lived Experience of mental illness to support rehabilitation and recovery goals; and or, a person who uses their Lived Experience in a formal role associated with policy development, research and or systemic advocacy.
 - 2.1.11. "Supporter" means a person who provides formal or informal support, assistance and or advocacy to a person living with a mental illness
 - 2.1.12. "Term" means 2 years.
 - 2.1.13. "Objects" means the objects of the Association set out in **Rule XXX**.
 - 2.1.14. "Rules" means these rules of association as amended from time to time.
 - 2.1.15. "Special Meeting" means any meeting of Members of the Association called by the Board to consider a specific matter.
 - 2.1.16. "Recovery" is "a philosophy and approach to services focusing on hope, self determination, active citizenship and a holistic range of services." (New Zealand Mental Health Advocacy Coalition)
- 2.2. All definitions in the Act apply to these Rules.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1. To develop, promote and support Peer Work and Peer Workers and ensure that peer work is integrated into all Australian mental health services.

4. OBJECTS

- 4.1. To promote Peer Work in social inclusion, public health, mental health and welfare policy.
- 4.2. To advocate for the adoption of Peer Work in clinical and non-clinical, public and private services.
- 4.3. To act as a community of practice for Peer Workers and supporters in order to further develop and promote effective Peer Work and Peer Workers
- 4.4. To provide a mechanism for the mutual support, sharing of ideas and information, and create and promote standards for Peer Workers and Peer Work.
- 4.5. To enhance the capacity, efficacy and accountability of Peer Workers utilising systems such as standards, policies, research, personal and professional development, education and training.
- 4.6. To promote the continuing development of recovery oriented support.
- 4.7. To promote social inclusion through greater awareness, acceptance, understanding and support of lived experience and Peer Work.
- 4.8. To advocate for and participate in informed and ethical research which further develops recovery and Peer Work.
- 4.9. To collaborate with other like-minded associations and organisations in the best interest of Peer Work and Peer Workers.
- 4.10. To engage in any other activities which directly support the development of Peer Work and Peer Workers in Australia

5. POWERS

- 5.1. The Association may:
 - 5.1.1. acquire, administer and dispose of any real or personal property necessary for the achievement of the Association's functions;
 - 5.1.2. administer property on trust;
 - 5.1.3. open and operate bank accounts;
 - 5.1.4. invest its monies in any security in which trust monies may by Act of Parliament be invested;
 - 5.1.5. borrow money upon such terms and conditions as the Association thinks fit;
 - 5.1.6. give such security for the discharge of liabilities incurred by the Association as it thinks fit;
 - 5.1.7. appoint agents to transact any business of the Association on its behalf;
 - 5.1.8. enter into any other contract it considers necessary or desirable;
 - 5.1.9. appoint and/or employ such persons considered necessary for the attainment of the Objects of the Association;
 - 5.1.10. terminate the appointment and/or employment of the persons referred to in **Rule XXX** appoint and/or employ such persons considered necessary for the attainment of the Objects of the Association; above at its discretion;
 - 5.1.11. obtain such funds considered necessary for the attainment of the Objects of the Association;
 - 5.1.12. promote co-operation with organisations with similar Objects to the Association;

- 5.1.13. affiliate with organisations if such affiliations are declared by the Board to be of benefit and complementary to the Objects of the Association; and
- 5.1.14. do all such other things as the Association may from time to time deem incidental to its powers or conclusive to the attainment of the Objects of the Association.

6. THE SEAL

- 6.1. The Association may use a common seal upon which its corporate name shall appear in legible characters.
- 6.2. The seal shall not be used without the express authorisation of the Board and every use of the seal shall be recorded in the minutes of the meetings of the Board. The affixing of the seal must be witnessed by the Public Officer of the Association and either one other board member, or any other such persons as authorised by the Board, providing that two such persons witness the affixing of the seal..
- 6.3. The seal shall be kept in the custody of such person as the Board may from time to time determine.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSOCIATION

- 7.1. Any person or organisation wanting to support the achievement of the Association's Objects may apply for membership of the Association.
- 7.2. A Board Member may veto an application for membership of the Association, subject to the appeal process outlined in **Rule XXX** below.
- 7.3. For the purposes of the appeal process referred to in **Rule XXX**, the Board must appoint a sub-committee comprising 3 Board Members none of whom shall be the Board member wishing to exercise the veto. In determining the outcome of the appeal the sub-committee will take into account the reasons presented by the Board member exercising the veto. The decision of the sub-committee is final and binding and must be communicated to the applicant in writing.
- 7.4. Upon the acceptance of the application by the Board and upon payment of the first annual subscription the applicant shall be a Member of the Association.
- 7.5. The Board may grant life membership to any person who has given exceptional service or has made an outstanding contribution to the benefit of the Association.
- 7.6. The Board shall keep a register of membership listing all life members and Members.
- 7.7. A Member may resign from membership of the Association by giving written notice thereof to the Association.
- 7.8. The Board may make any by-laws in relation to membership or Member subscriptions that are not contrary to these Rules.

8. MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- 8.1. Subject to **Rule XXX** there will be three types of Membership.
 - 8.1.1. Ordinary Membership

The category of Ordinary Membership is reserved for people with Lived Experience and who are actively engaged in Peer Work activities, **and or** those with a Lived Experience who have completed formal training and or professional development (as recognised by the Board of the Association from time to time) in Peer Work.
 - 8.1.2. Associate Membership

The category of Associate Membership is reserved for individuals who support Peer Work but who do not meet the criteria for Ordinary Membership

8.1.3. Organisational Membership

The category of Organisational Membership is reserved for organisations and associations which have share a common interest in the promotion of Peer Work and which have relevant documented objectives which are congruent with the objectives of Peers Australia Inc.

9. MEMBER SUBSCRIPTIONS

- 9.1. The annual subscription fee for membership shall be determined at the discretion of the Board.
- 9.2. The subscription fees of membership shall be payable annually from 1 July each year or at such other times as the Board shall determine.
- 9.3. Any Member whose subscription is outstanding for 3 months or more shall automatically cease to be a Member of the Association.

10. EXPULSION OF A MEMBER/TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- 10.1. A member who has brought or, in the opinion of the Board and based on reasonable evidence, is likely to bring the Association into disrepute may have their membership terminated and expelled from the Association by the Board.
- 10.2. After giving the relevant Member an opportunity to be heard or to make a written submission, the Board may, in its absolute discretion, terminate the relevant Member's membership. Expulsion shall be effective immediately.
- 10.3. Particulars of grounds relating to any proposed expulsion must be sent to the relevant Member at least 30 days before the meeting of the Board at which the matter will be determined.
- 10.4. The determination of the Board will be communicated to the Member in writing.
- 10.5. An application for membership by any person whose membership has been terminated may be made to the next elected Board. Such an application for membership must be treated as a fresh application, not a renewal of the existing membership.

11. THE BOARD

- 11.1. The affairs of the Association shall be managed and controlled by the Board which, in addition to any powers and authorities conferred by these Rules, may exercise all such powers and do all such things as are within the Objects of the Association and are not by the Act or by these Rules required to be done by the Association in general meeting.
- 11.2. The Board shall have the power to appoint, employ and dismiss such officers and employees as are required to carry out the Objects of the Association, including a Public Officer required by the Act and may delegate any of its powers to such officers and employees.
- 11.3. The Board shall be comprised of not less than five (5) individuals, and not more than eight (8) individuals who are members of the Association, at least three (3) of whom must have a lived experience.
- 11.4. The Initial Board shall comprise of a preselected group of Directors which will be presented for election at the first public meeting of the association:
- 11.5. Those nominated shall include representation from at least two Australian states and or Territories

- 11.6. After a period of 12 months, half of the positions on the Board will be declared vacant, and elections will be held to select Directors of the Board according to the provisions of **Rule XXX**.
- 11.7. No more than half of the members of the Initial Board may seek to retire at the first Annual General Meeting.
- 11.8. The election of Board members at the first Annual General Meeting pursuant to this rule shall be subject to the requirements for the composition of the Board as defined in Rule 10.3. The term of each elected Board member elected at this and all subsequent Annual General Meetings shall fall vacant after a two (2) year term.
- 11.9. The Executive Director of the Association will be an ex-officio member of the Board without voting rights.
- 11.10. The Board may co-opt up to two (2) additional Directors to ensure that it has the relevant collective skills, knowledge and experience to govern the Association. Co-opted Directors will serve a term of no more than twelve months, after which they may be reappointed by the Annual General Meeting as Directors, according to the provisions of clause 10, or as Co-opted Directors by the Board.
- 11.11. Board member shall be an employee of the Association.
- 11.12. The Board shall appoint an Executive Committee comprising of a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer from among its membership.
- 11.13. The Executive Officer shall be the Public Officer
- 11.14. The Vice Chairman shall assist the Chairman, deputising for him or her, and undertaking any special matters delegated by the Chairman or the Board.
- 11.15. A person appointed by the Board shall keep the minutes of the Board and general meetings of the Association in accordance with the requirements of section 51 of the Act.
- 11.16. The Treasurer shall provide support to the Board in accounting and financial matters; liaise with representatives of funding authorities, government agencies and external auditors as required; provide advice to the Association on accounting systems and monitor performance; ensure that the Association's financial affairs are correctly and efficiently conducted; ensure that all funds are dealt with in accordance with these Rules; and ensure that accurate and timely information is regularly circulated to the Board.
- 11.17. The Board shall be responsible to the Association for correct financial management in accordance with the Act and which is consistent with both the Purpose specified in Rule 3 and the Objects specified in **Rule XXX**.
- 11.18. The Board may establish sub-committees chosen from its membership from time to time to carry out any specific purposes which the Board deems necessary or expedient. The Board may co-opt any person it considers appropriate to assist the sub-committees in the performance of their duties. Terms of Reference describing the role, responsibilities, reporting requirements and authorities of each sub-committee must be approved by the Board upon establishing any subcommittee.
- 11.19. No person shall be eligible to stand for election unless a Member of the Association has formally nominated that person. The formal nomination shall be signed by both the nominating Member and the nominee (to signify a willingness to stand for election) and must be received by the Board appointed Returning Officer at least 21 days prior the Annual General Meeting.
- 11.20. Notice of all persons seeking election to the Board shall be given to all Members of the Association with the notice calling the meeting at which the election is to take place. The

Board must review all nominees for compliance with the provisions of **Rule XXX**. Notice of all nominations shall be given to Members of the Association with the notice calling the meeting at which the election is to take place.

- 11.21. Election shall be by majority vote of Members both present and by proxy, except that no election is necessary if the number of nominees does not exceed the number of positions available.
- 11.22. After 3 terms in office a Board Member must resign and shall not stand for re-election in the next term.

12. BOARD MEMBER VACANCY

- 12.1. The office of Board member shall become vacant if a Board member:
 - 12.1.1. is elected, nominated or appointed in breach of **Rule XXX**;
 - 12.1.2. is disqualified by the Act;
 - 12.1.3. is expelled as a Member under these Rules;
 - 12.1.4. is permanently incapacitated by ill health;
 - 12.1.5. is absent without prior notice of the Board from more than three consecutive Board meetings or from more than four Board meetings in a 12 month period;
 - 12.1.6. is no longer a Member of the Association; or
 - 12.1.7. resigns in writing.
- 12.2. The Board may appoint any individual pursuant to the power of co-option provided under **Rule XXX**, or otherwise to fill any casual vacancy. The appointed individual shall hold office to the next AGM or such lesser period as the Board determines.

13. PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD

- 13.1. The Board shall meet together, in person and or by other means, as often as is necessary to conduct the business of the Association, but in any event not less than six (6) times in each term of office.
- 13.2. A quorum for a meeting of the Board shall be five (5) members.
- 13.3. The Chairman shall preside at meetings of the Board, or in his/her absence the Vice Chairman; otherwise the Treasurer or another member of the Board at the Board's discretion.
- 13.4. Decisions of the Board shall be determined by a majority of votes except that in the event of equality of votes the Chairman shall be given a casting vote.
- 13.5. A member of the Board having a pecuniary interest in a contract with the Association must disclose that interest to the Board as required by the Act and shall not vote with respect to that contract.
- 13.6. Proper minutes of all meetings of the Board shall be entered in the minutes book or file kept for that purpose. The minutes kept pursuant to this rule shall be signed by the Chairman (or such other person acting in that capacity pursuant to **Rule XXX**) presiding over the meeting at which the proceedings took place or by the Chairman of the next meeting.
- 13.7. Where minutes are entered and signed they shall be evidence that the meeting was convened and duly held and that all decisions and appointments made at that meeting shall be deemed to be valid.

14. ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

- 14.1. The Board may call a Special Meeting of the Association at any time and shall call an Annual General Meeting in accordance with the Act.
- 14.2. Upon a requisition in writing signed by no fewer than six (6) Members of the Association the Board shall within twenty one (21) days of the receipt of the requisition convene a Special Meeting for the purpose specified in that requisition.
- 14.3. If a Special Meeting is not convened within twenty one (21) days as required by **Rule XXX** the requisitionist may convene a Special Meeting and:
 - 14.3.1. such a meeting shall be convened in the same manner as a meeting convened by the Board and for the purpose specified in the requisition;
 - 14.3.2. the Board shall ensure that the requisitionist is supplied free of charge with details of Members entitled to receive a notice of meeting; and
 - 14.3.3. the reasonable expenses of convening and conducting such a meeting shall be borne by the Association.
- 14.4. At least twenty-one (21) days' notice of any meeting of the Association shall be given to Members. The notice shall set out where and when the meeting shall be held and particulars of the agenda, including any general business items approved by the Board.
- 14.5. In the case of the Annual General Meeting, the business to be considered at the meeting shall include the accounts and reports of the Board and the auditors, the appointment of auditors and Board members and any other business requiring consideration by the Association in general meeting.
- 14.6. A notice may be given by the Association to any Member by serving the notice personally or by sending it by post or electronically, to the address appearing in the register of membership. Where a notice is sent by post service the notice shall be deemed to be effected if it is properly addressed and posted by ordinary prepaid mail.
- 14.7. The Annual General Meeting shall be held once each calendar year and not prior to, or more than three (3) months after, the close of the financial year which shall be the 30th day of June each year.

15. PROCEEDINGS AT GENERAL MEETINGS

- 15.1. At any general meeting, one half of the total registered Members of the association or thirty (30) Members, whichever is the lesser, shall constitute a quorum.
- 15.2. If, within 30 minutes after the time appointed for the meeting, a quorum is not met, then fifteen (15) Members shall constitute a quorum.
- 15.3. An Executive Committee Member shall preside as Chairperson at any meeting of the Association other than a Board meeting.
- 15.4. The Chairperson may, with the consent of any meeting at which there is a quorum, adjourn the meeting. When a meeting is adjourned for twenty-one (21) days or more notice of the adjournment shall be given to Members pursuant to **Rule XXX**.
- 15.5. Items of general business must be received at the office of the Association 28 days prior to an Association meeting. The Agenda, information relating to the business of the meeting and provisional motions will be distributed to members at least 21 days prior to the meeting.
- 15.6. The Association will recognise formal proxy votes at Association meetings according to the policies described by the Board from time to time.

- 15.7. At any meeting of the Board or general meeting of the Association decisions shall normally be by consensus determined through the Chairman or Chairperson, as the case may be. The Chairman or any Member present may request that a resolution be put to a vote. In this case, decisions shall be by simple majority of those present except as otherwise provided in these Rules.
- 15.8. Where these Rules or the Act is silent as to procedure, general law meeting rules apply.
- 15.9. Any contested election at a meeting shall be by secret ballot.
- 15.10. Each member including a member organisation present at a meeting shall be entitled to one (1) vote.
- 15.11. A member may vote at a general meeting as proxy for an absent member who has delivered a written notice of proxy to the Chairman or the premises of the Association prior to commencement of the general meeting.
- 15.12. Proper minutes of all Association meetings shall be kept and signed by the Chairman of each meeting. Signed minutes shall be deemed as evidence that the proceedings took place and that all decisions, appointments and elections made at the meeting are valid.

16. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 16.1. The Association shall keep such accounting records as are necessary to correctly record and explain the financial transactions and financial position of the Association.
- 16.2. At each Board meeting the Treasurer is required to make a statement regarding the solvency of the Association.
- 16.3. At the end of each financial year the books and accounts of the Association shall be audited by a qualified auditor who is not a Member of the Association. The auditor shall have been duly nominated by the Board and shall be requested to prepare an auditor's report for submission to the Annual General Meeting. The Board shall submit the auditor's report to the meeting.
- 16.4. If required by the Act, the annual (periodic) return shall be lodged with the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs within six months after the end of financial years. It must be accompanied by a copy of the accounts, the auditor's report, the Board's statement and the Board's report [refer to section 36(1) of the Act].
- 16.5. Except through their own negligence or willful default, board members and employees shall be indemnified by the Association against all losses and expenses incurred by them in any action of law arising out of discharge of their respective duties. The Association will insure the Board members during any period of their elected term.

17. AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES

- 17.1. The Board may, subject to the approval by a special resolution of the Members of the Association, alter, rescind and replace by substitute rules these Rules. Such alteration, rescission or replacement shall be registered as required by the Act.
- 17.2. Any Member wishing to propose any amendment to these Rules must give adequate notice in accordance with **Rule XXX** thereof in writing to the Association and state the nature of such alteration or addition and move such proposed alteration or addition at the next Annual General Meeting or Special Meeting called for the purpose of considering such amendment. If seconded these Rules may be amended or altered by a simple majority of members present at that meeting.
- 17.3. Notification of such proposed amendment as described above must be available to every member at least twenty-one (21) days before the Annual General Meeting or Special Meeting at which such proposal is to be moved.

18. LIABILITY, PROPERTY & DISSOLUTION

- 18.1. Persons who, with the authority of the Board, incur any debt or other liability on behalf of the Association shall have such liability met by the Association so that they incur no personal loss.
- 18.2. The income property and funds of the Association, whensoever derived, shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the Objects of the Association. No portion thereof shall be paid or transferred, directly or indirectly, by way of dividends, bonus, or otherwise howsoever by the way of profit to the Members or relatives of Members of the Association. Nothing herein shall prevent the payment in good faith of remuneration, to any officer or servant of the Association or any Member of the Association in the return for any service actually rendered to the Association, or reasonable and proper rental for premises let by any Member to the Association.
- 18.3. On dissolution, all property remaining after payment of all legal liabilities shall be transferred to such other body formed for promoting similar objectives or charitable objects as shall be approved by the Association provided that:-
 - 18.3.1. such other body shall also prohibit the distribution of income and property to the Members to the extent stated herein;
 - 18.3.2. such other body is an Eligible Charity; and
 - 18.3.3. the Association shall not be dissolved except by approval of not less than three-quarters of the Members present at a constituted meeting of the Association. Twenty-one (21) day's written notice of the proposed dissolution must be distributed to all Members.

19. RULES

- 19.1. Alterations to these Rules (including alteration to the Association's name, recession or replacement by substitute rules) must be proposed by the Board and approved by a two thirds majority of the Board before being put to a meeting of members.
- 19.2. The alteration shall be registered with the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs, Corporate Affairs and Compliance Branch, as required by the Act.
- 19.3. The registered rules shall bind the Association and every member to the same extent as if they have respectively signed and sealed them, and agreed to be bound by all of the provisions thereof.

PEERS AUSTRALIA:

THE FORMATION OF A PEER WORKER ASSOCIATION

CONSULTATION, JANUARY TO MARCH, 2011

INITIAL DRAFT REPORT

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information relating to Peers Australia can be obtained via:

- email peers@peersaustralia.org.au
- mobile Geoff Phillips, 0488 691 000
- mobile Charmaine Gallagher, 0412 182 435

INTRODUCTION

Peer Work is becoming a more recognised and respected intervention in Mental Health Services in Australia.

Mental Health reform and the promotion of the values and benefits of the Recovery approach to supporting people who experience mental health issues has led to a growth in peer work and consumer consultant roles.

Within this context a group of Peer Workers and advocates have begun a consultation process across Australia to determine interest in Peer Work and the potential formation of an organisation dedicated to the promotion of Peer Work.

This group does not claim to be 'representative' of Peer Work in and of itself, but they have an interest in determining if there is a place and purpose for a Peer Worker led non-profit association. Consequently the group drafted a range of objectives and definitions which might be considered to form part of the rules of association of an organisation formed to support Peer Work. These concepts were distributed to a wide range of stakeholders for comment, and key support for further distribution was provided by each state based non-government peak mental health association (eg. MHCSA or Vicserv) and Mental Health Council of Australia.

By participating in an online survey stakeholders were invited to:

1. Share views on the potential of Peers Australia
2. Subscribe to a Peers Australia mailing list, and keep informed of this initiative
3. Get involved in the establishment of the organisation
4. Support the formation of Peers Australia.

Over the period January to March 2011, the survey was distributed widely and 106 responses were received. From the range of optional identifying information (n = 50 / 106) it can be determined that the survey was completed by stakeholders in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia, and representing rural and metropolitan settings.

All questions were voluntary

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were used during the consultation:

- For the purpose of this consultation Peer Work refers to the work of those in the Mental Health sector, although it is recognised that peer mentors operate in other sectors (eg. youth and education).
- “Lived Experience” means living with the experience of mental illness.
- "Member" means a financial member of the Association.
- “Peer Worker or Peer” means a person who, working collaboratively with a person who has a Lived Experience, intentionally uses their own personal Lived Experience in to support rehabilitation and recovery goals; and or, a person who uses their Lived Experience in a formal role with objectives associated with policy development, research and or systemic advocacy.
- “Supporter” means a person who provides formal or informal support, assistance and or advocacy to a person with a Lived Experience.
- The term "Peer Worker" includes "Consumer Consultant" and vice versa. We note the different roles and different lived experience which contribute to the knowledge and skills of people in such positions.

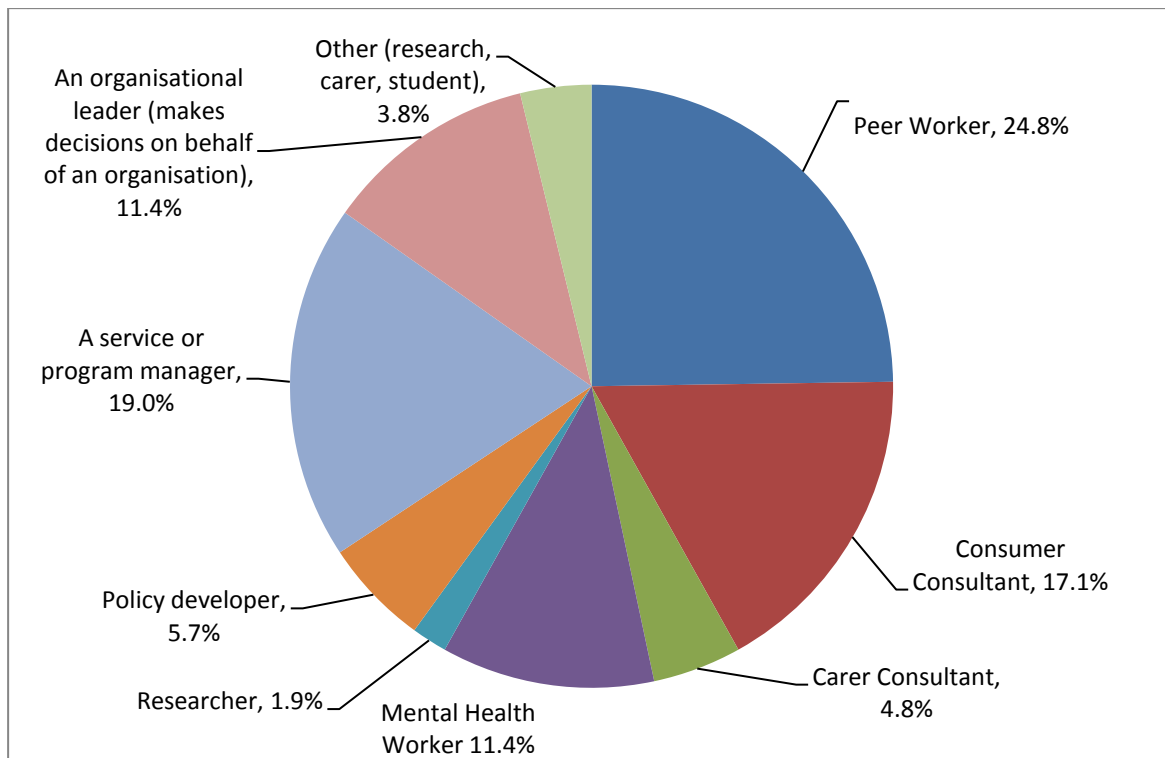
CONSULTATION RESULTS

RESPONDENTS

Respondents were asked to identify their interest in peer work from a range of available options. More than 99% responded to this question.

The results indicate that survey participants responded as individuals or on behalf of organisations. Each category nominated in the survey was represented by at least two respondents. The majority of respondents were as ‘peer workers’ under the definitions and this group represented between 47% and 58%¹. Leaders and managers made up approximately 30% of respondents.

¹ Responses indicate that many of those who selected “Mental Health Worker, not in a peer work role, also identified as having a ‘lived experience’ and therefore would be eligible for membership of Peers Australia under the draft rules of the association.



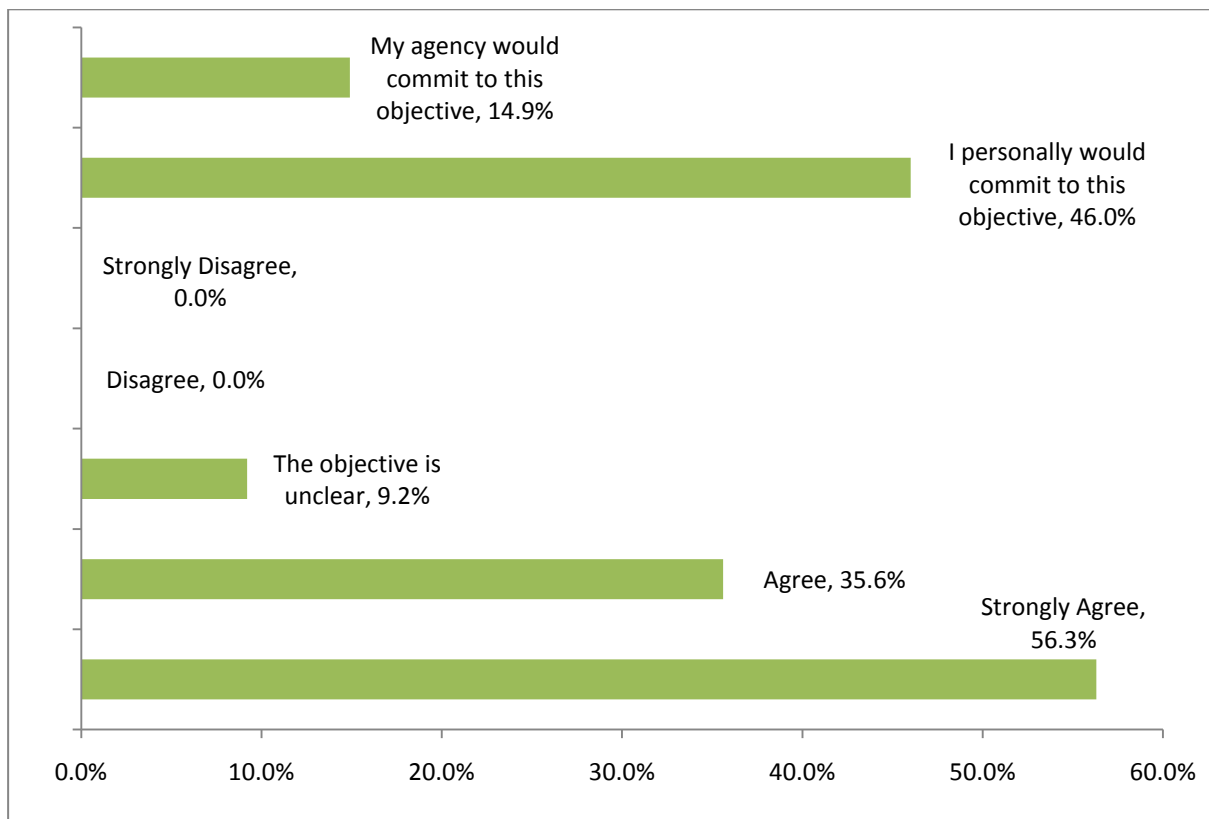
N=106

PURPOSE

“To assist promote and support Peer Work and Peer Workers in Australia.”

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for the purpose, ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly. In addition respondents were asked to indicate if they would either be committed themselves to such an organisation or if they would be prepared to make a commitment to an organisation with such a purpose on behalf of the organisation which they represented.

Open comments provided with responses indicated some suggestions for adding to or improving the Purpose statement, but did not indicate any real objections. In all almost 92% of respondents (n=87) were supportive of the purpose statement.



N = 87

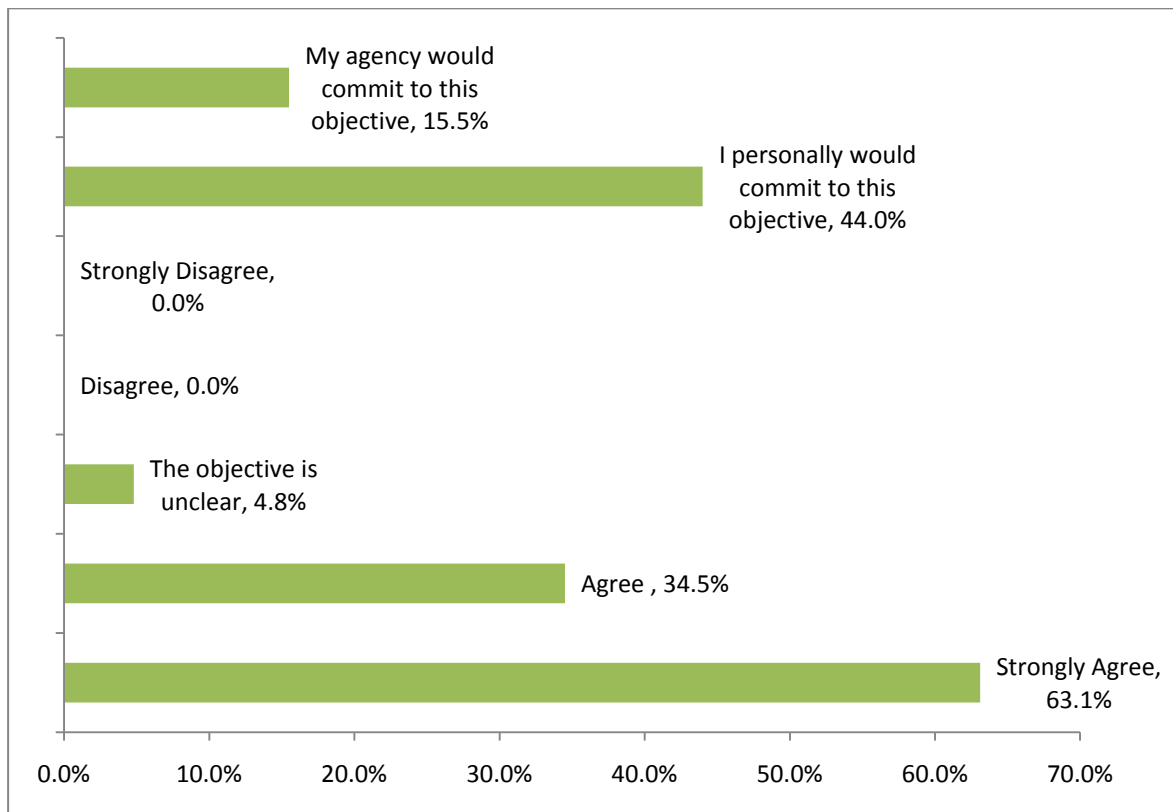
OBJECTS

The survey outlined nine proposed Objectives to establish the main areas of interest and activity for any peer work association. In general terms participants confirmed the scope that these objectives identify with suggestions for minor inclusions or exclusions made in open comment fields.

The two most consistent themes arising from the comments were a) the idea that a peer work association must be governed by peer workers, and b) the idea that any such association should not engage in the direct 'registration' or 'accreditation' of individuals as peer workers. As a consequence the objectives described are likely to be reviewed to remove the descriptor "professional" and replace it with the notion of a "community of practice." The draft rules of the association already make fully provision for the governance of the association to be directed by peer workers.

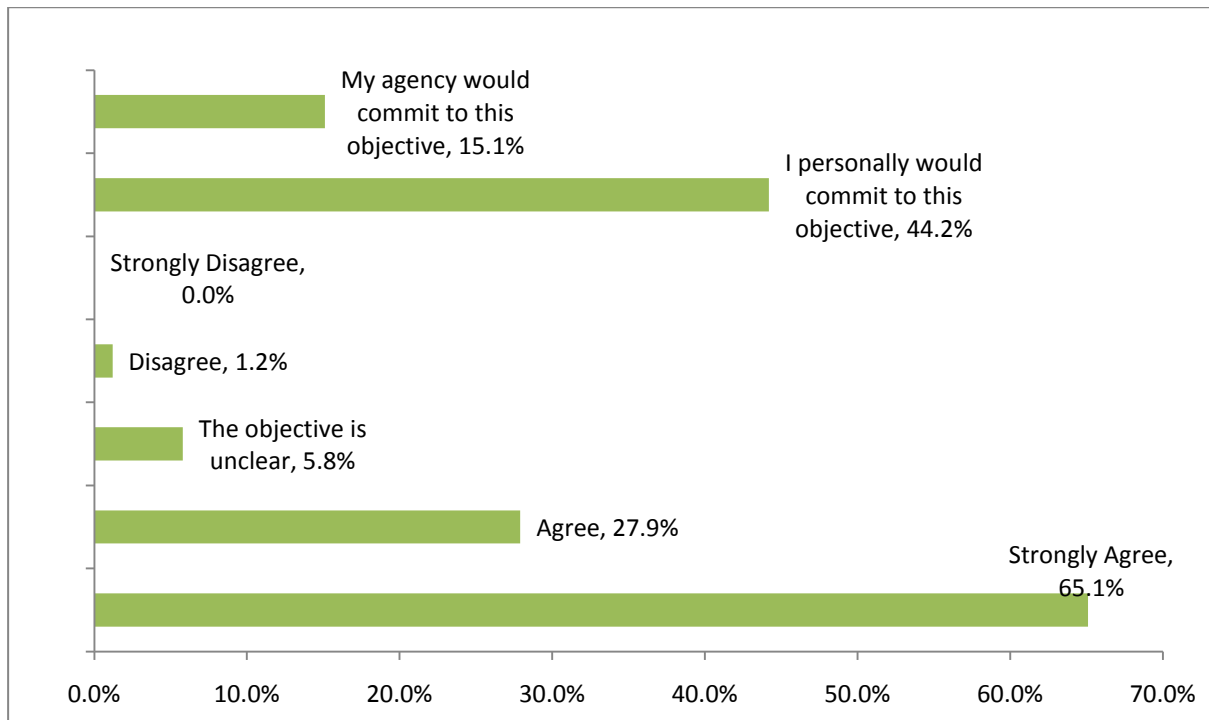
Further analysis and trending of open comments will be required to add additional clarity into the future.

To provide a platform for the promotion of Peer Work in social inclusion, public health and welfare policy.



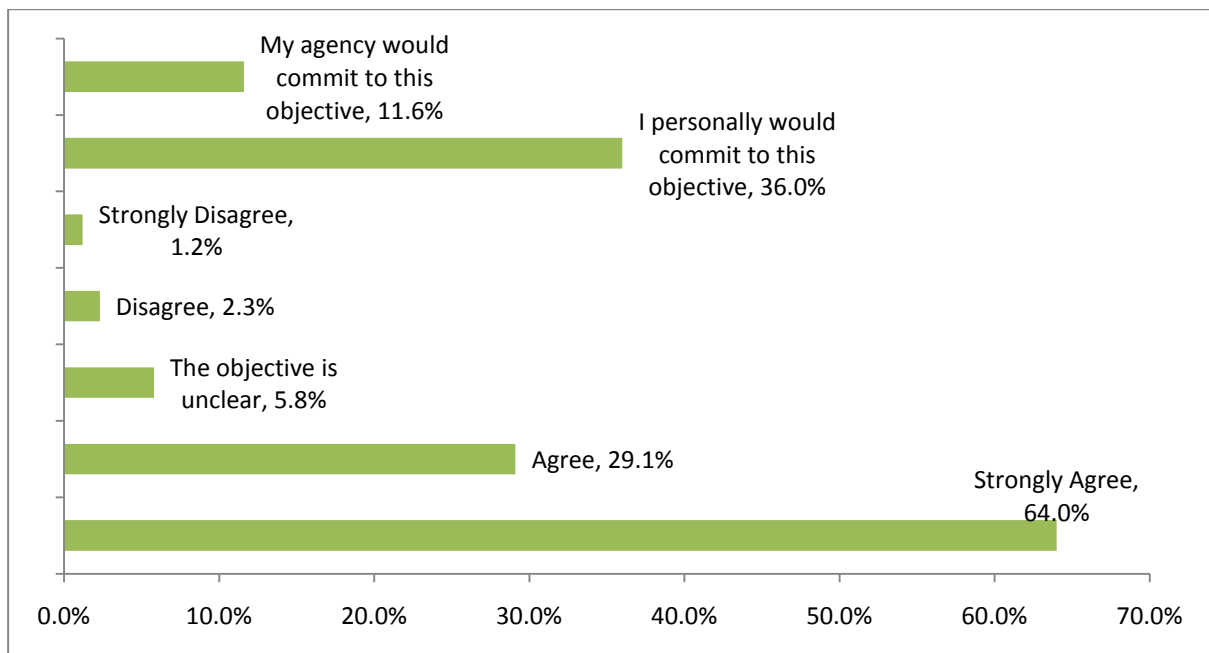
N=84

To advocate for the adoption of Peer Work in both clinical and non-clinical services



N= 86

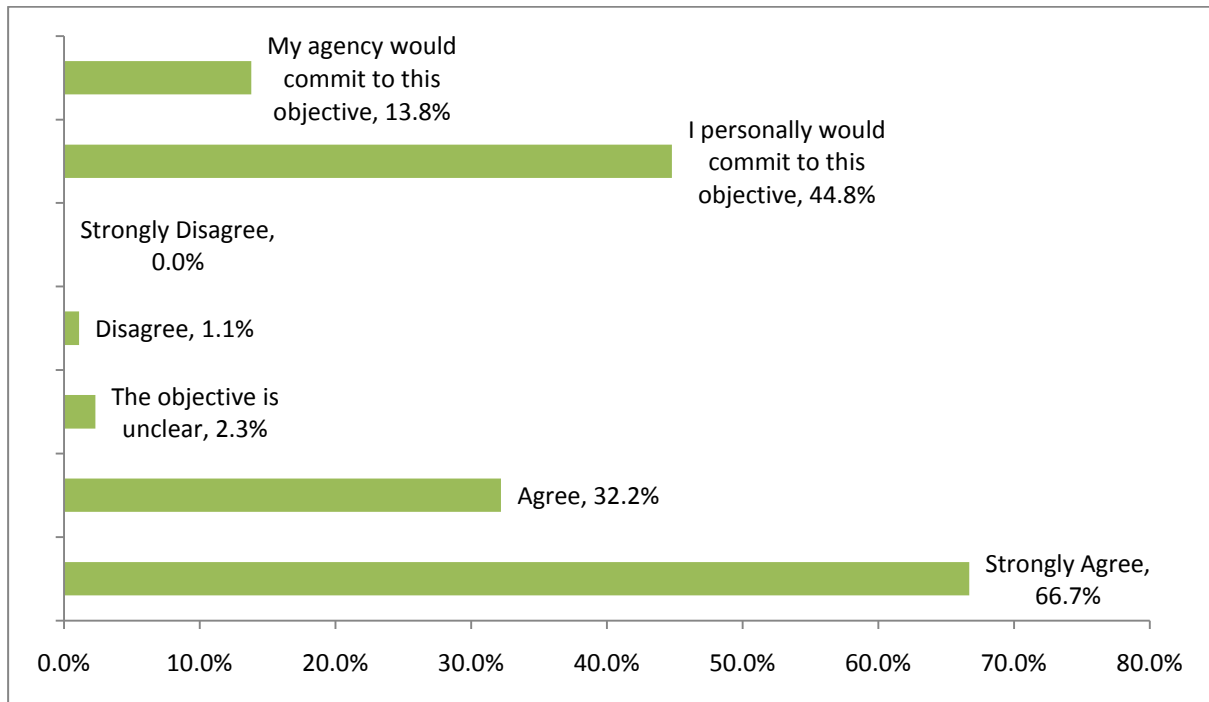
To act as a professional association for Peer Workers and supporters in order to further develop Peer Work and Peer Workers



N= 86

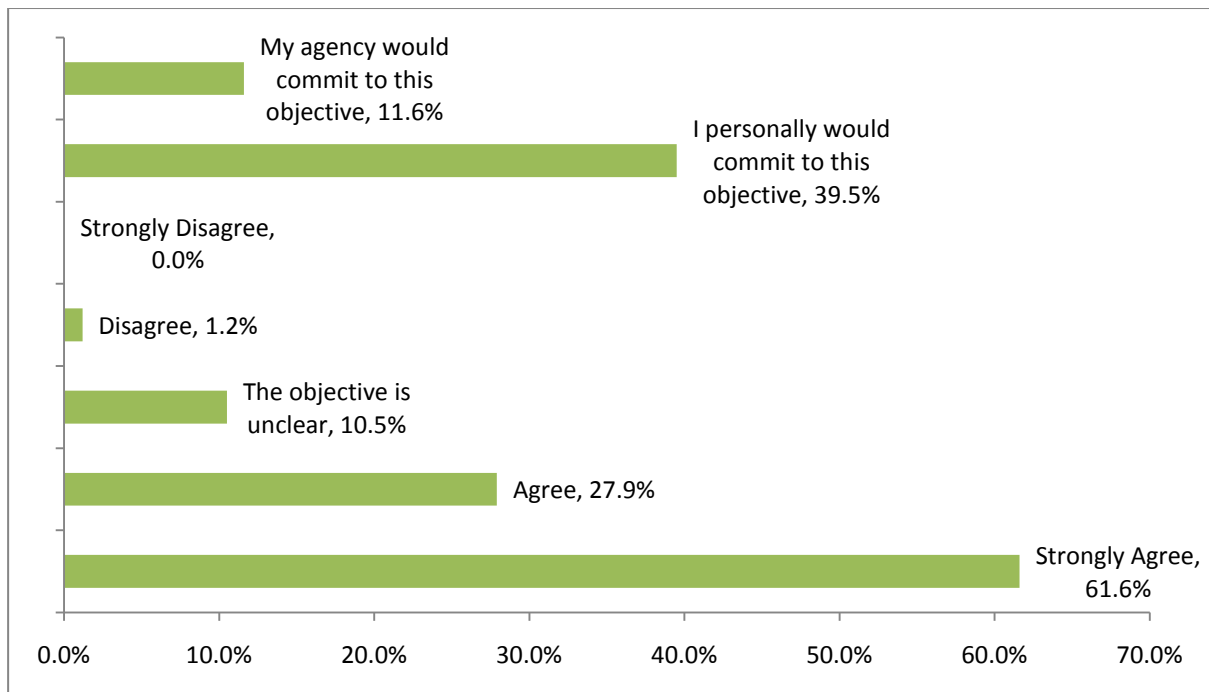
The slight decrease in supportive responses for this objective are associated with comments suggesting that 'professional' may not be the most accurate or useful term to describe the association.

To provide a mechanism for the mutual support, sharing of ideas and information, and accountability of Peer Workers



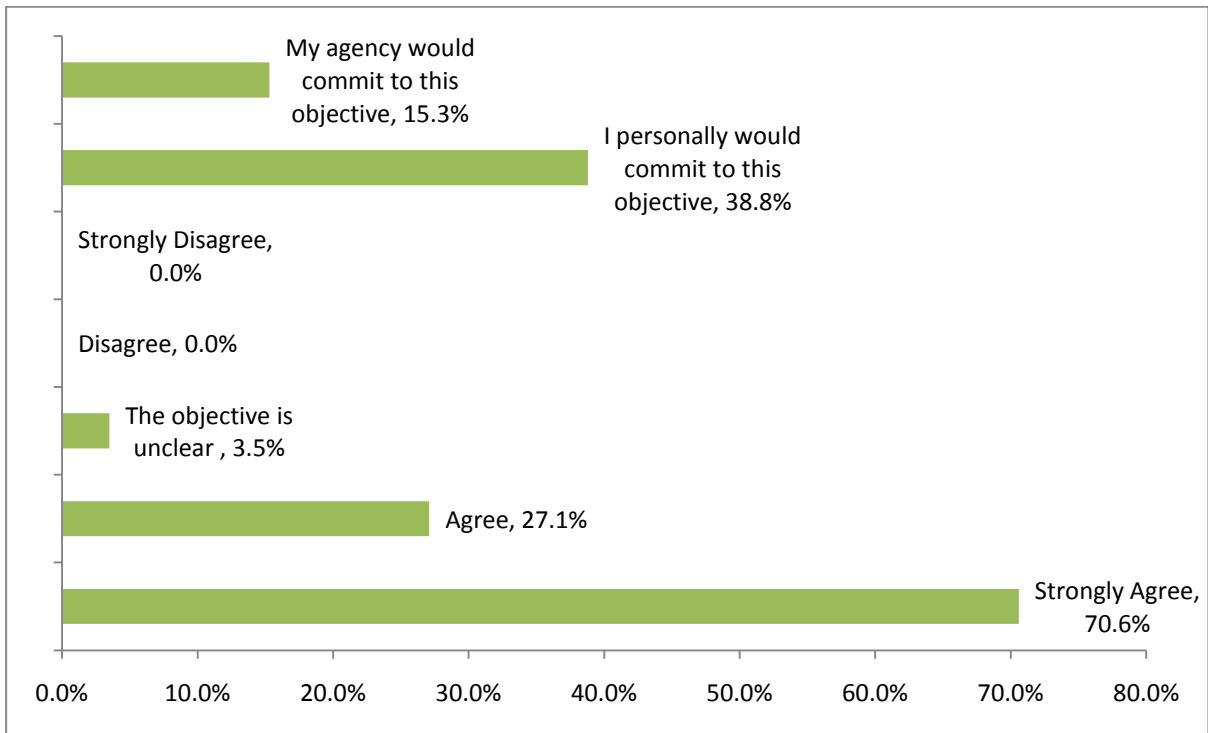
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To enhance the capacity, efficacy and accountability of Peer Workers within the framework of a professional association and utilising systems such as standards, research, personal and professional development, education and training opportunities associated with Peer Work and Peer Workers.



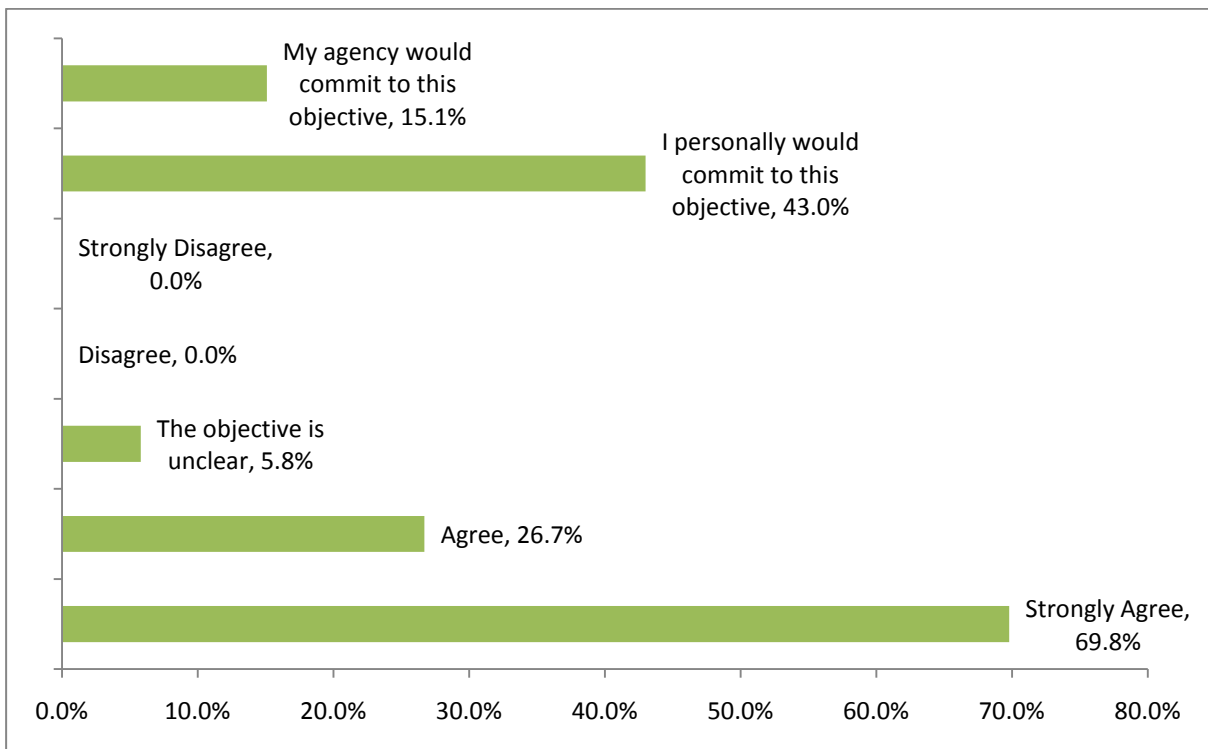
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To promote the continuing development of the community based recovery and support sector for people living with an experience of mental illness, and for those who support them.



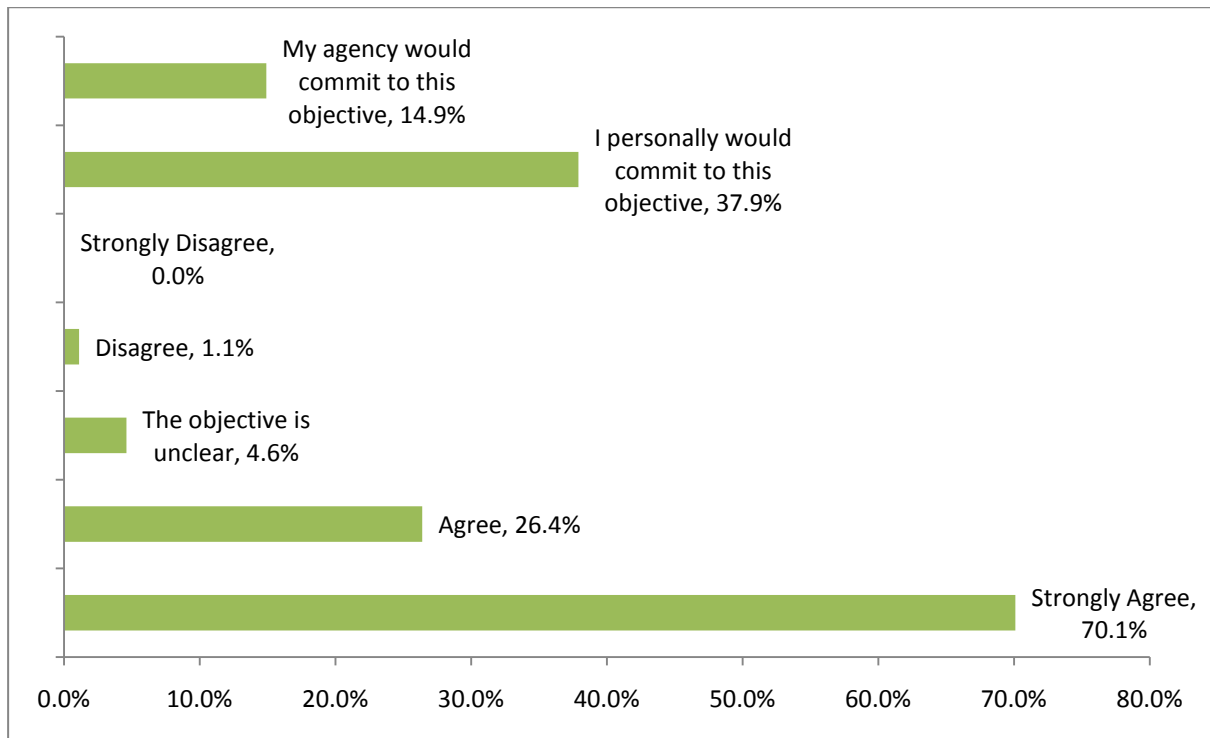
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To promote inclusion through greater awareness, acceptance, understanding and support of Peer Work.



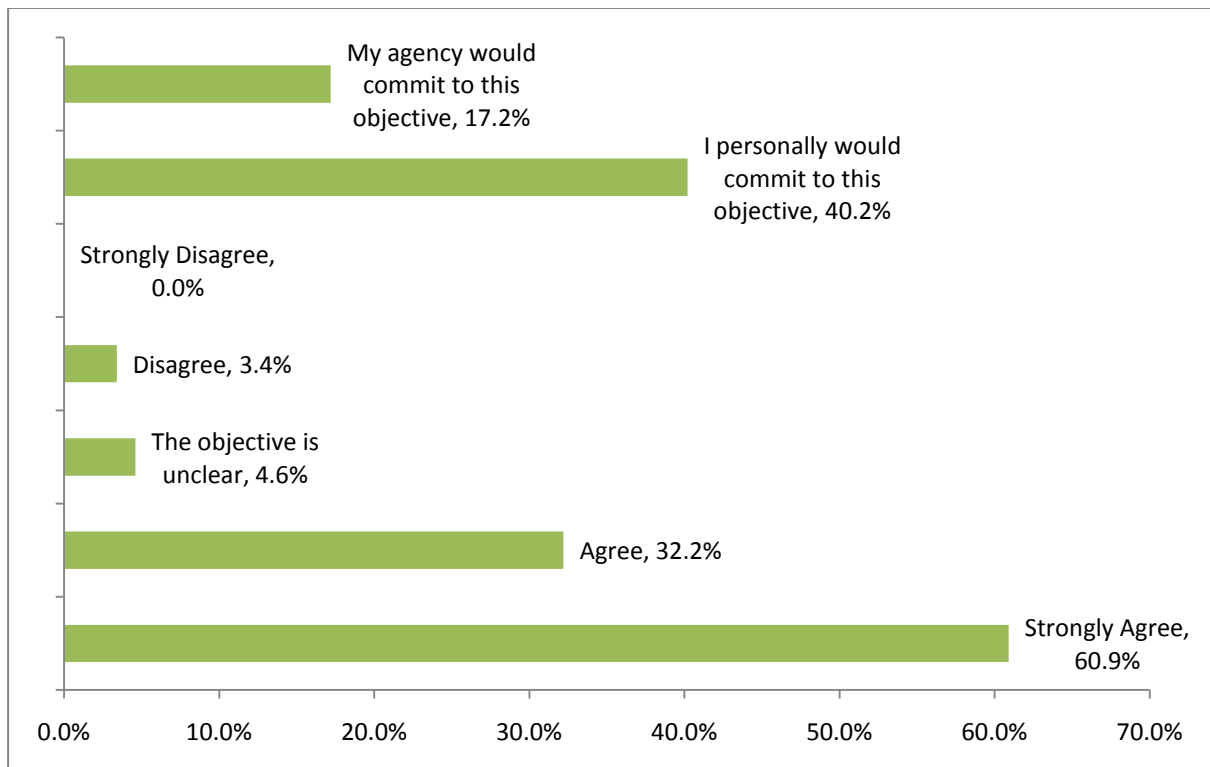
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To advocate for informed and ethical research which informs the further development of Peer Work.



N= 87

To collaborate with other like-minded associations and organisations in the best interest of Peer Work and Peer Workers.



THE EVIDENCE FOR PEER WORK

Employing peer workers within mental health services there is an acknowledgement of the expertise of lived experience and how this experience can be utilised to empower, support and educate consumers and carers who are navigating mental health services. Peer work holds the principle that “people who have life experiences can better relate and consequently may offer more authentic empathy and validation” (Mead & MacNeil, 2006: p29). Peer work within mental health has gained significant attention both internationally and within Australia as a valid and effective approach to inspiring hope that recovery is possible (Mead S., & MacNeil C, 2006). Peer support grew out of a political and practical need to improve mental health service treatment across the world and is embedded in a “rights” movement around the shared experience of the consumer/survivor/patient movement (Jacobson & Curtis, 2009). Both shared and practical experiences provide options and ideas that clinical approaches may overlook (Mead & MacNeil, 2006).

Peer work is intricately tied to the concept of recovery within mental health policy and service provision (Jacobson & Curtis, 2009). Recovery can be viewed as the manifestation of empowerment, being that although a person has a diagnosed mental illness they also possess the skills, knowledge and tools for their own psychiatric rehabilitation. Conceptualizing “recovery” as the framework for mental health services has created a hope that recovery from mental illness is possible. This belief then reinforces interventions and practices which promote recovery. Peer workers are living examples that recovery is possible and in this sense peer work is intricately related to providing hope for consumers, families and carers while also assisting to develop service providers understanding and expression of recovery oriented practice within their roles.

The *peer workforce* refers to people employed in job roles that require them to identify as being, or having been, mental health consumers and carers. The term *peer workforce* reflects the diversity of job roles in Australia. For example, in South Australia the Central Northern Adelaide Service employed peer specialists and carer consultants in five acute units within the region. Over the last five years what is now referred to as the *Lived Experience Workforce* and has developed and grown. The peer workforce program in South Australia has enhanced the outcomes achieved by mental health services (Nester & Galletly, 2008). Feedback from consumers and carers within the region reported Peer Specialist and Carer Consultants to be effective supports for increasing hope and recovery and were seen as a valuable and appreciated source of acknowledgement and understanding (Kling, Dawes & Nester, 2008).

The South Australian experience is but one example of many in Australia, both within government and non government services, and also in community and acute settings. Peer workers have been added to existing services to enhance efficacy, and have been foundational in others, such as the FaHCSIA’s Personal Helpers and Mentors programme.

The **United States** has supported and funded the development of peer led or consumer operated services which have been shown to engage more individuals than traditional services. In the United States there are over several hundred consumer or peer led services including self help, drop in facilities, peer support, accommodation services, employment services, crisis prevention and respite services (Queensland Government, 2009). **New Zealand** has over thirty consumer driven programs and a review of those programs reported that consumer run programs and services produce highly positive outcomes for service user (Queensland Government, 2009).

In February 2011 a National Mental Health Peer work Forum was held in Melbourne with the purpose of identifying and prioritising peer workforce development needs. The forum was funded and supported by the Australian Government department of health and ageing and the Mental Health Council of Australia. The Mental Health Coordinating Council prepared the May 2011 report on behalf of Community Mental Health Australia, The National Consumer and Carer Forum, and the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Board.

The forum was held 22 February 2011 Australian Technology Park Sydney NSW with the aim of exploring:

- What is currently known about the mental health (consumer and carer worker) workforce in Australia?
- What is best practice in peer work in Australia and Internationally?
- What issues exist for the Australian peer workforce and what are the priority development areas?
- What competencies and skills are needed for peer work?

The report of the forum expressed that there is an urgent need for a consumer and carer workforce strategy to be developed as part the Australian government workforce strategy for mental health. The report from the forum highlighted the need for a national approach to peer work rather than current and inconsistent state and territory approaches. Areas highlighted as needed for a national approach included national qualifications, awards, career pathways, remuneration and role clarification. Also highlighted was the need for the development of organisational policies and procedures, the development of a code of ethics and a code of conduct for peer work in Australia. In terms of possible next steps it was suggested that there is a need for the development of a national Peer worker Professional Association.

Mead S & MacNeil C (2006) Peer Support: What makes it Unique? *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*. 10 (2), 29-37

Jacobson N & Curtis L (2000) Recovery as Policy in Mental Health Services: Strategies emerging from the States. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, Spring 2000 p1-10.

Nester P & Galletly C (2008) The employment of consumers in mental health services: politically correct tokenism or genuinely useful? *Australian Psychiatry*, Vol 16, no. 5, pp 344-347

Kling L W, Dawes F J & Nester P (2008) Peer Specialists and Carer Consultants Working in Acute Mental Health Units: An initial Evaluation of Consumers, Carers, and staff Perspectives. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation* 12 (2), 81-89

National Mental Health Peer Work Forum – Identifying and Prioritising peer workforce development needs. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing & Mental Health Council of Australia (May 2011)

Overview of Future Directions – Consumer Operated Services Program. Queensland Government, Disability Services Queensland, 2009

NEXT STEPS

The following have been identified as the key steps in the furthering of this consultation process and the exploration of the viability and usefulness of the association:

1. Re-engage with stakeholders with the information generated by the initial consultation
2. Identify stakeholders willing to actively participate in the exploration of the viability of the association
3. Liaise with aligned peaks (eg. Mental Health Consumer Alliances, MHCA & CMHA) to consider collaboration and shared and or unique agenda
4. Source tangible financial and personnel support for the next steps
5. Prepare findings and engage stakeholders in anticipation of a decision to proceed with formation of the association by interested stakeholders in September 2011. The TheMHS Conference has been identified as a useful national forum for decision making.

AN OUTLINE OF THE THEMHS WORKSHOP

Introduce PA
Consultation Process
Background Peers Association's Internationally (table of comparison, objectives)
PA and the National policy objectives
Discuss (objectives, definitions, membership categories)
Identify potential PA projects
Introduce the interim Board
Sign up members (pending incorporation)