

## Speech notes

**Author:** Janet Meagher AM

**Event:** Launch of *Peer Work in Australia: A New Future for Mental Health*

**Date:** Friday 12 September 2018

**Location:** Parliament of Australia

### **Acknowledgement of our heritage**

*Awareness and respect for our courageous mental health peer leaders*

My task today is simple,  
But profound.....

Before commencing this most significant event, where Australia's first co-produced book on peer work will be launched, we need to stop for a moment.

We need to understand the significance of this day, this work, this publication, a product of those who are experts by experience.

Only fifty years ago, NO, forty, perhaps even twenty years ago, this project, this peer managed, peer written and peer co-produced book could have been seen as a serious escalation of delusions, a crazy, impossible case of fantasy and something that needed quick action to defuse... and perhaps a dose or two of extra medication to tone down our over inflated grandiose ideas.

Well, this is not grandiose, this is not delusional. We have brought peer and policy expertise here in this book. It reflects the professionalism, experience and hopes of those involved in the peer workforce in this country.

The generations of people in Australia who have lived with mental illness, from the time of the First Fleet convicts to the present day, have routinely been ignored, trivialised, discounted. Their life opportunities consisted of incarceration, abuse, criminalization and experimentation, through to modern day lonely isolation in the community. Over the years they have consistently experienced suffering, intimidation and physical, emotional and sexual abuse in the name of treatment and care.

I am, and some of you, also are, survivors of this type of 'service'. I'm not here to damn all that, but, to honour, respect and build on the consumer learnings that have arisen from recognising that services and policy makers must listen to the voices that have taken lessons from these past abuses and malpractice and, in doing so, represent the wisdom that comes from those who went before us. Our collective knowledge, our representative wisdom and peer leadership is that which brings us resilience and tenacity. Those historic generations of people with mental health issues in this country were frequently mocked, discounted and trivialised, and some of us still are.

Those who came before us set the groundwork, they persisted. They insisted that our experiences constituted 'expertise', that our voices were credible, our inputs invaluable, our participation an essential.

So, in gratitude for this we offer some quiet thoughts of thanks to those who went before us and acknowledge their part in our being able to meet here today and in rejoicing in the publication of this book by, for, and about Peer Work in Australia.

***Janet Meagher AM***  
***Parliament House, Canberra***  
***Launch of "Peer work in Australia"- 12/9/18***

## Speech notes

**Author:** Anthony Stratford

**Event:** Launch of *Peer Work in Australia: A New Future for Mental Health*

**Date:** Friday 12 September 2018

**Location:** Parliament of Australia

### ***Welcome***

I wish you a warm welcome to an ever-expanding community of likeminded people who understand and wish to build on the value of lived experiences of recovery.

This book fills an important gap in the literature on peer work. Australia has been a leader in this field since its inception twenty years ago and we have learnt valuable lessons here that can benefit our fellow lived experience leaders across the globe, because peer work has become a truly global phenomenon. In fact, it is the fastest growing sector of the mental health workforce around the world.

It is within this context that we need to appreciate the value of what we, peers and champions, have produced, because others will be following our lead. There has been more academic research on peer work than on any other profession in mental health. The research shows that peers can engage people who have been difficult to reach and who have not benefited from traditional services, that peers can reduce the use of costly acute services such as emergency room visits and inpatient stays while increasing outpatient care. They can also reduce demoralisation and the use of alcohol, while increasing hope, empowerment and self-care.

This evidence has been important in establishing the credibility and effectiveness of peer work, however, it does not tell people how to do it, how it works or what it looks like in practice.

Jointly, the authors of this book hope that our combined effort will help fill this important gap in the literature, enabling others to transform their own pain and suffering into a constructive tool to alleviate the pain and suffering of others.

We have been afforded, and taken advantage of, this valuable opportunity. We also hope that this book will extend that same opportunity to our fellow peers around the world.

Quietly, we take pride in using our own lived experience, in what people see as a generous and instructive way, inspiring others to do the same in their local communities. For doing so transforms both individual lives and systems of care, as recovery becomes a reality for everyone.

## Speech notes

**Authors:** Mark Orr, CEO Flourish Australia and Robyn Hunter, CEO Mind Australia  
**Event:** Launch of *Peer Work in Australia: A New Future for Mental Health*  
**Date:** Friday 12 September 2018  
**Location:** Parliament of Australia

Thank you for the introduction, Frank. And, thank you Minister for agreeing to launch *Peer Work in Australia* today.

We'd like to acknowledge Julian Gardiner, Chair of Mind Australia who is with us here today; and Professor Elizabeth More, Chair of Flourish Australia who sends her apologies. Professor More had an appointment in Melbourne she could not move.

In the true spirit of collaboration and partnership, Robyn and I agreed that one of us would speak after agreeing together what we would like to say. So, I am very pleased today to be able to speak on behalf of both Mind Australia and Flourish Australia. Robyn and I are here today as the current CEOs, but we'd like to acknowledge Dr Gerry Naughtin and Pamela Rutledge who were the CEOs that agreed to this project and funding it.

As we write in the acknowledgement at the front of the book, "Flourish Australia and Mind Australia believe in the power of peer work".

As two leading community mental health organisations, we have been committed to growing the peer workforce for many years. We have directly seen the positive impact that peer workers have on the delivery of our services, engagement of people accessing our services and the outcomes people achieve.

We know that because we are organisations that listen deeply to and value lived experience.

People with lived experience of mental health issues tell us repeatedly of the importance of peer support in their recovery. Support from someone who has been through a similar experience inspires hope.

The evidence about the positive impact of peer work on mental health services continues to grow, and we are delighted that the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan recognises its importance as part of the reform of the mental health sector. Minister, we thank you for ensuring mental health is one of the Four Pillars of the National Health Plan, and for your personal commitment to growing and developing the peer workforce.

In discussing peer work we acknowledge and pay tribute to the many people with lived experience who have championed the importance of peer work and advocated long and hard for its recognition as an integral component of modern mental health services. We are delighted that so many of them, of you, are able to be with us today; and we remember those who have gone before us and on whose shoulders we all stand.

The idea for this joint publication came from Janet Meagher AM and Dr Gerry Naughtin, building upon a paper they wrote for the National Disability Insurance Agency's Independent Advisory Council. We thank Janet and Gerry for their work in raising this important issue within the NDIA's formal committee structure and for suggesting Mind Australia and Flourish Australia help create something much bigger.

It is great to have you here today Gerry in your new role, and for the NDIA to be represented at this launch.

We have been pleased to jointly fund the project, contribute to the Editorial Working Group and provide practical supports to ensure the book was published and available for sale.

We have been delighted to collaborate in this project that has gathered the evidence that supports the practice of peer work in Australia into one publication. The book highlights the breadth and diversity of the peer work profession and, most importantly, the contribution of peer work to a person's recovery journey. This book has been a way for us to take stock of where we are now in order to plan for a better future.

Our collaboration has been a clear demonstration of a very simple, yet powerful message, that the supports we provide are led by people with lived experience.

It gives us great pleasure to acknowledge and thank the Editorial Working Group – Janet Meagher, Anthony Stratford, Fay Jackson, Erandathie Jayakody, Tim Fong and Kim Jones - who have provided leadership and guidance for this project, as well as contributions to the book, on top of their day to day work.

We also thank the many contributors – including authors and participants in the focus group - who have ensured the book reflects the many facets of peer work across the country.

We are sure that the book will not only help us all reflect on peer work in Australia right now, but will help us identify new opportunities for its growth and development.

The development of this book, like the development of peer work, has been an exciting journey that we're proud to share a lead in.

We are confident that *Peer Work in Australia* will inspire us all to continue the much needed reforms of the mental health sector, led by people with lived experience.

## Speech notes

**Author:** Fay Jackson  
**Event:** Launch of *Peer Work in Australia: A New Future for Mental Health*  
**Date:** Friday 12 September 2018  
**Location:** Parliament of Australia

*Written and delivered by Fay Jackson, General Manager of Inclusion, Flourish Australia; NSW Deputy Mental Health Commissioner, NSW Mental Health Commission; contributing author and member of Peer Work in Australia Editorial Working Group; Founder, Vision in Mind; and proud peer worker.*

**All truth passes through three stages. In the first it is ridiculed. Then it is opposed. And finally, it is self-evident.**

PEER WORKERS ARE THE EMBODIMENT OF HOPE.

They embody hope for the people accessing services, for families and for clinical staff who work alongside peer workers.

THEY ARE THE PERSONIFICATION OF RECOVERY, POSSIBILITY AND THE VALUE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE.

There are many arms to the mental health lived experience movement however peer work epitomises our work, our mission and ethos.

Peer workers are now and will increasingly be recognised and valued for their experiences, abilities and positive cultural influence. Like the beautiful KINTSUGI Japanese pottery that is perfectly crafted, when it is broken and mended with gold. This is a beautiful metaphor for people with lived experience of mental health issues and peer workers. The “cracks, and the gold” of peer work and our personal and shared experiences is where the true value lies.

In the future people will understand that there is a major and crucial difference between staff in other positions who have a lived experience and peer workers. While other staff may choose to use their lived experience, it is a requirement of peer workers. Peer workers are loud and proud. When asked the iconic Australian question at a barbecue “what do you do for a living?” and we answer “I am a peer worker”, this is always followed by another question, “what is peer work?” This requires the peer worker to be open and proud of their experiences and work. This requires us to be brave and generous with our experiences always keeping in mind the respect for our lived experience community. This sharing of our experiences, can at times make us feel vulnerable, however there is great strength in sharing that vulnerability. It breaks down barriers, stigma and discrimination and it builds connection, bridges and honesty. This is Peer Work.

NOW AND IN THE FUTURE PEER WORKERS ARE AND WILL BE THE BRIDGES TO RECOVERY AND FULLFILED, MEANINGFUL LIVES.

This coming decade is the decade of growth and value in the peer workforce. This is the natural evolution of services because by the year 2020 one third of psychiatric nurses will be of retirement age and by the year 2025 50% of psychiatric nurses will be of retirement age. This is now the age of peer work.

Increasingly lived experience lecturers who have been peer workers are delivering lectures to nursing, psychiatry and psychology students. The brave, new face of mental health services will welcome and value peer workers and all designated lived experience roles.

Services will understand that they are like an orchestra. Orchestras are made up of many different instruments, not 40 violins or 40 drums. In the future services will understand that the conductor of the orchestra will be the people accessing the services. Each person will write and conduct the music of their life and the different instruments will ensure that the music is played exactly the way it should be played.

Peer work is not just a job. It is a calling. In the future it will increasingly be the beginning of a career in designated lived experience positions in mental health.

Whilst having a lived experience is an innate requirement of peer work, services will understand that they need to employ people because they have a lived experience and also the skills, ability, strengths and ethos required to be great peer workers. The people we support deserve this.

**SERVICES AND PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE THAT PEER WORKERS POSSESS THE COMPASSION, MUTUAL EXPERIENCES, UNDERSTANDING, AND ABILITY TO USE THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE PURPOSEFULLY. THE VALUABLE USE OF THESE EXPERIENCES AND A MUTUAL NON-CLINICAL LANGUAGE AND DIALOGUE ARE UNIQUE TO THIS BEAUTIFUL DISCIPLINE OF PEER WORK.**

**IN THE FUTURE LARGE NUMBERS OF QUALIFIED, WISE, EXPERIENCED PEER WORKERS WILL HAVE PROVEN THEY HAVE THE SKILLS abilities, strengths, ethos and resilience it takes to support people on their recovery journeys and embrace connected, meaningful lives.**

Peer workers and lived experience staff will contribute to policy and protocols.

Because research has proven the qualified success of our peer operated services, in the future peer operated services will increase in number and have no difficulty in being funded. Peer workers are experts in providing people with the supports needed to fulfil their lives and requests in their NDIS packages.

**IN THE FUTURE THERE WILL BE NO DISCRIMINATION OR STIGMA AGAINST PEER WORKERS OR PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.**

Adolescents will be saying I want to be a peer worker when I grow up and by the end of my career I will be the lived experience CEO of excellent mental health services that are fully integrated into the community.

**THIS WONDERFUL, GROUNDBREAKING BOOK PROVES THAT THIS IS THE ERA FOR PEER WORK. THE TIME HAS COME.**

ALL TRUTH PASSES THROUGH THREE STAGES. IN THE FIRST IS RIDICULED.  
THEN IT IS OPPOSED. AND FINALLY, IT IS SELF EVIDENT. Attributed to Arthur  
Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

## Speech notes

**Author:** Erandathie Jayakody  
**Event:** Launch of *Peer Work in Australia: A New Future for Mental Health Services*  
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### *Thank You Speech*

The production of a book of this magnitude is not possible without the contribution of many. My task is to thank those who gave generously to make today possible.

Thank you to the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health, for launching this book and his staff for assisting with the event. Your presence today is recognition of the value and commitment to this powerful workforce at the highest level, the Commonwealth Government. We look forward to working with you on this journey.

Thank you to Frank Quinlan, Chief Executive Mental Health Australia for MC-ing the event.

Mind Australia and Flourish Australia for their commitment for this project. This book is entirely funded by both organisations equally. The project did not have any external funding. Thank you also for your deep commitment and on-going support in promoting the peer workforce.

Thank you to Janet Meagher AM – member of the independent advisory council to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and Gerry Naughtin former CEO of Mind and now Strategy Advisor to NDIA. This book is their brainchild. Whilst co-authoring a discussion paper on peer work for the NDIA they identified that there is a need or a gap for a more comprehensive publication on Australia's peer work. As we know identifying the gap is the easy part, filling the gap is the difficult part. Janet and Gerry approached this task with their usual enthusiasm and vigour. They formed a coalition between Mind and Flourish to start this project. We will not be here today if it wasn't for their ingenuity.

Some 30 authors contributed to the book. Most are peers. They have documented their experience in the paid lived experience workforce and research with eloquence, courage and professionalism. It was inspiring to see that most are first time authors. A further 45 people across Australia participated in a workshop to discuss key issues and future directions. Thank you for your contribution, enthusiasm and encouragement. This is your book, you made this possible.

Thank you to Kim Jones who provided secretariat support for the project.

Thank you to Peter Neilson from Flourish for his support in the design and formatting of the book.

To members of the editorial working group: We first met in October 2017 and at the first meeting the production of the book seemed an impossible task. It seemed a fantasy. Quite a number of people expressed doubt about producing a book of this magnitude in such a short time. But there were budgets to be met and timelines to be met, we didn't have a

choice. It was an uphill task to say the least. It is remarkable that this book was produced in 10 months and under budget! The group stretched their capability and time to give most generously to enable this to come about.

Particular thanks to Tim Fong who did an enormous amount of work at the pointy end of the project. He did it with patience and such good humour.

Thank you to Anthony Stratford, Janet Meagher and Fay Jackson for their knowledge and wisdom. It was a privilege to be part of the editorial working group with you. As someone who is relatively new to the peer workforce, on behalf of the emerging peer workforce, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your tireless efforts. You have dedicated your lives to champion the value of the lived experience and peer work. You are an inspiration. You are our heroes. You are the giants on whose shoulders we now stand.

This book is co-production at its finest. Peer workers worked alongside their allies to make this happen. This is reflected in the membership of the editorial working group, contributing authors and the workshop participants. It is an example of how much we can achieve when we work together, alongside each other.

Thank you to all the others, both those present and absent that contributed in various ways. You have been part of something unique and powerful. The publication of this book is a landmark on the journey of peer work in the mental health sector in Australia. It is the first of its kind in the world. Do not underestimate your contribution to the book and the impact it will have on the future of the peer workforce. Thank you for being part of this journey.

I will leave you with this quote from Bono:

*When the story of these times get written, we want it to say that we did all we could, and it was more than anyone could have imagined.*