

## **The power of diversity in lived and living experience participation: learnings from NADA's Consumer Advisory Group**

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### **Background:**

The value of engaging people (consumers/clients) with lived and living experience in the alcohol and other drug (AOD) sectors planning, development and evaluation cannot be over emphasised. Recognising the importance and benefits, NADA's Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) was established. In this presentation NADA and CAG members reflect on their experiences, learnings and next steps.

### **Description of Model of Care/Intervention:**

The CAG was established 4 years ago and includes people with lived/living experience of AOD use and accessing AOD services. Membership of the CAG is based on relevant experience and expertise with people from diverse backgrounds being prioritised, to represent the great diversity among people accessing AOD treatment and support. Through regular meetings, consultations and other forums the CAG informs the organisations work, including policy/project development, strategic planning and advocacy.

### **Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:**

Engaging people with lived and living experience in all areas of AOD work has vast benefits for individuals, staff, organisations and the broader community. It can improve the inclusiveness of services to provide safe and equitable programs and support. While living/lived experience participation is valuable, it needs to be well planned through comprehensive consultation to be effective. It requires resources and contingency planning to ensure it's meaningful for everyone. Good intentions, while admirable, are not enough, and can set people up to fail.

**Conclusion and Next Steps:** At an organisation level, the role of the CAG is continually evolving. NADA is committed to enhancing our engagement with people with living and lived experience and that of its member organisations. To do this we will continue to work in partnership with the CAG and take leadership and direction from them.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** Not applicable