

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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LIVED EXPERIENCE TO GROW OUR MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

The Labor Government is growing its lived and living experience mental health workforce, with the latest cohort of Victoria's Peer Cadet Program set to begin their careers in the sector.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt has congratulated the biggest graduating cohort yet, with 31 students recently completing the program – which provides a paid employment opportunity while students complete a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

Peer workers are trained to use their lived or living experience of mental distress and recovery to support others who are going through similar experiences.

The program provides important learning and employment opportunities to help participants develop knowledge, skills and confidence in a structured and supported environment while receiving supervision, training and reflective practice opportunities that are discipline specific.

The Labor Government's Peer Cadet Program commenced in 2022 with a \$1.3 million investment across six mental health community support services: Neami National, Mind Australia, EACH, Uniting Victoria Tasmania, cohealth and Wellways.

Following a successful first round, a further \$600,000 was invested in 2023 to expand the program to an additional three services – Ballarat Community Health, Eating Disorders Victoria and ermha365.

The Peer Cadet Program responds to the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health* recommendation to increase the number of entry points into the lived and living experience workforce and provide a supportive and structured environment for learning.

The Labor Government has invested more than \$50 million since 2020 to build the required supports, structures and career pathways for the lived and living experience workforces to help realise the vision of the Royal Commission and grow the Mental Health workforce.

Applications are now open for 2024-2025 intake for Victoria's Peer Cadet Program via health.vic.gov.au/lived-experience-workforce-initiatives/lived-experience-peer-cadet-program.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

"We know there is a critical demand in our workforce for people with their own lived experience – this program is helping people get the skills and qualifications they need to help address that demand."

"This year's graduates are about to begin working in community mental health services, bringing the care and skill that can have a profound effect on the lives of Victorians who need it most."