



# Lived Experience Framework

South Australia's Housing and Homelessness System



## Acknowledgements

### Acknowledgement of First Nations Peoples'

We acknowledge the Kurna people as the traditional custodians of the lands upon which this *Lived Experience Framework* was developed. We pay respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal peoples' who attended from other lands and contributed to the Framework.

We acknowledge the First Nations Peoples of Australia, recognising their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present, and emerging, and are committed to honouring all First Nations Peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationship with their country, lands which were never ceded.

### Acknowledgement of people with lived experience

We acknowledge the individual and collective expertise of people with lived experience. We recognise their vital contribution at all levels and value the courage of those who share this unique perspective for the purpose of achieving better outcomes for all.

### How was The Lived Experience Framework developed?

SYC's Lived Experience and Engagement Service (LEES) sought people with a lived experience of housing insecurity<sup>1</sup> and homelessness to form an Aboriginal Lived Experience Reference Group (ALERG) and Lived Experience Reference Group (LERG). These groups worked with representatives of the South Australian Housing Authority-funded Homelessness Alliances and Directly Contracted Services (DCS), community housing representatives and other key stakeholders within and beyond the homelessness sector to collaborate on the design of this *Lived Experience Framework: South Australia's Housing and Homelessness System*.

### Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this document are of people who have current lived experience in the private rental market and are not necessarily those of RentRight SA, a service delivered by SYC with funding from the SA Housing Authority (SAHA). This document is designed to provide information that assists the SAHA and the housing and homelessness sector to understand the needs of those using the services over the development and implementation of the 2020-2030 housing reforms. The information provided in this framework can be utilised to better respond, reflect, plan, design and develop how lived experience will be embedded in the reform.



**Government of South Australia**  
SA Housing Authority

SYC would like to thank Mission Australia for their use of their *Learning from Lived Experience: A Framework for Client Participation*. The *Lived Experience Framework: SA's Housing and Homelessness System* was adapted from ©Mission Australia (2020), *Learning from Lived Experience: A Framework for Client Participation* and edited for use for SA's Housing and Homelessness context. Permission for using this content sits under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

<sup>1</sup>Housing insecurity experienced by low-income renters is multi-dimensional, including needing to move as a result of circumstances outside a person's control, instability in housing circumstances, feeling unsafe within the home and its environs, lack of privacy, lack of supportive relationships and connection to the local community, and lack of comfort. A perceived lack of control over housing and other circumstances has been found to underlie all dimensions of housing insecurity AHURI, 2009" [https://www.ahuri.edu.au/sites/default/files/migration/documents/AHURI\\_RAP\\_Issue\\_113\\_Housing-insecurity-and-its-link-to-the-social-inclusion-agenda.pdf](https://www.ahuri.edu.au/sites/default/files/migration/documents/AHURI_RAP_Issue_113_Housing-insecurity-and-its-link-to-the-social-inclusion-agenda.pdf) viewed 13/2/23

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## Background

*In October 2020, the South Australian Housing Authority (SAHA) announced the 2020-2030 reform of the housing and homelessness system. A vital pillar of the reform was a plan to provide housing and homelessness services through an Alliance model.<sup>i</sup>*

- 1) This model envisions a new way of delivering housing and homelessness services to South Australians using a joined-up approach focusing on early intervention and prevention.<sup>ii</sup>
- 2) Before the commencement of the Alliance methodology, the SAHA commissioned a Lived Experience Engagement Service (LEES) as part of its first tranche of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) released for public tender. An aspect of the LEES service was to facilitate the development of a *Lived Experience Framework*. The Framework was intended by the SAHA to guide the reform of housing and homelessness services in South Australia by embedding lived experience into policy, service design and delivery.
- 3) With LEES under the auspice of SYC, a sector-wide Framework has been co-designed with people with current or previous lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness in South Australia who became members of the inaugural LEES Lived Experience Reference Group (LERG) and Aboriginal Lived Experience Reference Group (ALERG). As experienced participants of the existing systems, members were uniquely equipped to recommend service improvements and participate in decisions that affect them.
- 4) To bring together the lived experience wisdom of LEES, ALERG and LERG members with the practice wisdom of the housing and homelessness sector, LEES formed a Lived Experience Framework Reference Group (LEFRG). We take this opportunity to thank those who represented the Country South Alliance, the Country North Alliance, the Adelaide Northwest Homelessness Alliance, Toward South Alliance (metropolitan South and Adelaide) and the State-wide Domestic and Family Violence Alliance. Additional members of the LEFRG to whom we offer our thanks are representatives of the SAHA, the Lived Experience Leadership and Advocacy Network (LELAN), the Community Housing Council of SA (CHCSA), the Mental Health Coalition of SA (MHCSA) and the SAHA Aboriginal Advisory Committee.
- 5) These combined efforts and additional consultation and refinement have resulted in developing this document, *The Lived Experience Framework: South Australia's Housing and Homelessness System*.

Through continual engagement with people with lived experience, along with guidance and training in the sector, LEES will monitor and evaluate the application of this Framework. We will ensure that lived experience has a role in South Australia's housing and homelessness sector and is genuinely embedded, contributing to achieving the South Australian Government Our Housing Future 2020-2023 strategies and targets.

# Lived Experience

## Framework:

### A vision for change in South Australia's Housing and Homelessness System

- Every aspect of housing and homelessness service design, delivery, policy development and reform activities are informed by the insights of people with lived experience of the housing and homelessness system in South Australia
- Every aspect of housing and homelessness service design, delivery, policy development and reform activities are done in respectful and equitable partnership with people with lived experience of the housing and homelessness system in South Australia
- Housing and homelessness services in South Australia recognise, respect, and support the leadership and participation of people with lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness
- Housing and homelessness services provide access to designated lived experience employment opportunities in supportive and inclusive workplaces for people with lived experience of the housing and homelessness system

### What does it mean to have lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness?

One of the first tasks of the LERG and ALERG was to clarify for the LEES and sector what it meant to have a lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness. Current research defines lived experience through a mental health lens which describes recovery and carers/families, which did not adequately capture the experiences of housing insecurity. As such, LEES facilitated discussions at the LERG and ALERG meetings to help members articulate the impacts that being in the housing and homelessness system created for them. This enabled the definition of lived experience of the housing and homelessness sector to be described through the words of those who had accessed this system. Please bear this in mind when adopting this definition of lived experience.

*Lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness is having your sense of identity, life chances, safety, stability, or wellbeing threatened due to insecurity of appropriate housing. In this context, appropriate is defined as:*

- Stable housing (security of tenure)
- Accessibility (specific needs of people are considered)
- Affordability (it does not compromise a person's ability to afford other necessities in life)
- Location (access to physical, social and economic supports)
- Habitability (fit to live in)
- Culturally appropriate (inclusive of housing policies free of discrimination)

Our definition acknowledges that lived experience goes beyond the loss or lack of a physical shelter. Hereafter in this document, a reference to "lived experience" refers to experiences according to the definition above unless otherwise stated.



## Why do we need a Lived Experience Framework?

*The Lived Experience Framework* is needed if we are to improve outcomes for people experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness and be authentic about prioritising and embedding lived experience into sector reform.

Evidence from the mental health, suicide prevention, and alcohol or other drug sector has shown the significant benefits that embedding lived experience can have on service delivery and client outcomes.<sup>iii</sup> There is also mounting evidence that people's needs are better met when those with lived experience are involved in designing and evaluating policies and services.<sup>iv</sup> People using services feel safer and more engaged if they are designed with, and not simply for, the people who are utilising them. The SAHA recognised that the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) sector, largely without experience in this approach, required a framework to embed lived experience at the service delivery, organisational and sector levels.

Housing insecurity or homelessness is broader than being without a home. It encompasses understanding marginalisation, discrimination and a shared experience of loss or changes in social structure and inclusion. Recognition of this, and the knowledge that people with lived experience bring, is invaluable to sector reform.

*The Lived Experience Framework* seeks to provide clear guidance on the guiding principles and functions of lived experience as it relates to the SHS sector. It is a blueprint for utilising and embedding lived experience at a service delivery, organisational and sector level.

The commitment to embedding lived experience in the ongoing housing and homelessness system reforms means that as the sector, organisations, and individual staff transition into new ways of working, their operations and strategic direction will be informed by priorities and principles identified by people with lived experience, as laid out in the Framework.



## What is the purpose of The Lived Experience Framework?

Part 1 of *The Lived Experience Framework* provides guiding principles and practices for engaging and embedding lived experience into service design and systems reform. It provides a scaffolding for and compels us towards the emergence of a sector that values the unique contribution that lived experience offers to ensure housing and homelessness services reflect the priorities and needs of people accessing these services.

Lived experience engagement can make an important contribution to services and system design. When individual experiences are gathered and used to amplify or represent the experience of (silent) others, they become a far more powerful and effective tool for service evaluation and system transformation. For lived experience to be embedded in the design of services and policies, we must authentically listen and respond to experiences in a way that is useful for South Australia's Housing and Homelessness sector. *Part 2 of The Lived Experience Framework* is a practical guide to help ground into practice the guiding principles of Part 1. *Part 2, A Practice Guide for Lived Experience Engagement*, will equip the sector with the tools to deliver a range of engagement activities involving people with lived experience to best capture strengths and issues from a solution-focused perspective. The intentional cultural and power shifts combined with the practical learnings will enable actionable insights from lived expertise to be embedded into system and service reform.

***Elevating the voice of lived experience in South Australia's Housing and Homelessness reform will create:***

- 1) More humane and empathetic services, organisations, and systems
- 2) More efficient systems by building on and utilising client and community assets and strengths
- 3) More effective systems by designing, delivering, and evaluating systems with people who have experience with the system.

## Who is The Lived Experience Framework for?

*The Lived Experience Framework* is a resource for the broader housing and homelessness sector. It is envisioned that guidance for cultural change, leadership, and practical approaches, as proposed in Part 1 and Part 2 of the Framework, will form the foundational structures that underpin housing and homelessness service design and delivery in South Australia.

***Housing and homelessness service systems referred to in this document include:***

- The South Australian Housing Authority as a statutory authority and service provider via its network of offices across the state.
- South Australian Homelessness Alliances, including the State-wide Domestic and Family Violence Alliance
- Community Housing Providers
- Non-governmental organisations providing State Government funded housing support services

Although it is designed for the housing and homelessness sector, the underlying ethos of the Framework is applicable to human services more broadly.







# Part 1:

## Lived experience engagement for better outcomes

The *Lived Experience Framework* outlines several ways to enable people with lived experience to participate and build understanding of people's needs and perspectives in order to improve the experience of those navigating and working within the various housing and homelessness system elements. Improving people's experiences of the sector's services and ensuring housing and homelessness organisations respond to people's unique needs and contexts will lead to better outcomes for all.

People are more likely to trust organisations within the sector and feel more connected to the people delivering services when there is true understanding rather than assumptions of people's needs and wants. Bringing together the lived experience context with the content expertise of SHS staff and other professionals (as illustrated in Fig 1) creates the opportunity for greater understanding.

It is important for housing and homelessness organisations to capture the outcomes and share stories of lived experience engagement activities to advocate for the needs of people with lived experience and scale good practice. In addition, capturing lived experience feedback and experiences provides evidence for decisions on where and how we can collectively improve the quality of services within the sector. There are many ways in which leaders at all levels in the sector can encourage lived experience participation and provide the opportunity for people to share their lived experience and expertise. Various ways to engage with and necessary considerations for engagement are contained in Part 2 of this Framework.

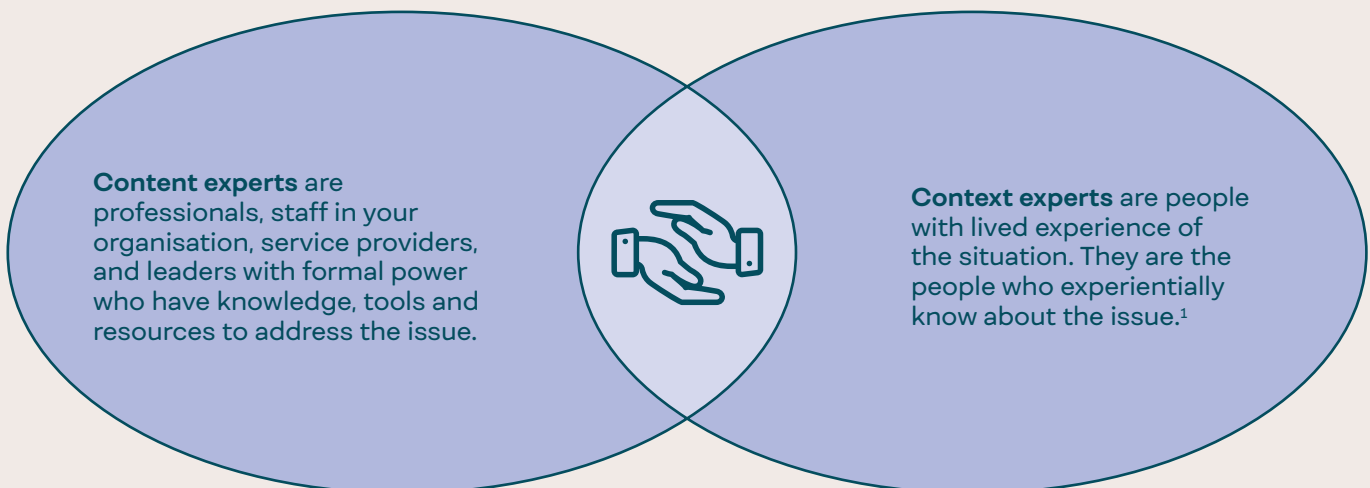


Figure 1: Bringing content and context expertise together to build understanding<sup>5</sup>



## Guiding principles

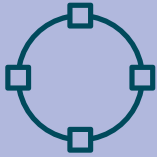
The vision for cultural change, lived experience leadership, and best practice service delivery proposed in the Framework are guided by the following principles:

1. Empathy
2. Adaptable
3. Accountability
4. Inclusion
5. Equity

These principles should underpin all work that embeds lived experience in housing and homelessness services across South Australia. There is a collective responsibility and commitment to embed the principles at individual, organisational and systemic levels.

Using the language of those involved in developing this Framework, **the chart below** provides a deeper understanding of what each of these five Guiding Principles mean.

	<p><b>Empathy</b></p> <p>Services engage people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness from a place of empathy and respect. Empathy is recognised as a vital principle as it speaks to the humanity in people. Individuals accessing services want to be seen as human beings, not just homeless people.</p> <p><b>What empathy looks like</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active listening</li> <li>• Seeing the whole person rather than their current situation</li> <li>• Person-driven and humane response</li> <li>• Ability to transfer or refer people to services (or [housing] officers) who can give them the best outcomes</li> <li>• Meet people with a sense of optimism in the face of all other challenges occurring while navigating the housing and homelessness system</li> <li>• Offer people opportunities to engage in the community and be sociable. Be sincere, not offensive about it</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Adaptable</b></p> <p>The lived experience of people accessing housing and homelessness services is used to inform and improve service design and delivery and is based on the premise that the 'system' will listen, respond and evolve. Most people will not fit into a category, and services need to give room for flexibility in their responses. Being adaptable is about recognising that people's needs are different and will differ as their circumstances can change over time.</p> <p><b>What being adaptable looks like</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility in thinking and assessment processes to deal with individuality</li> <li>• A responsive and flexible service</li> <li>• A receptive system that is capable of evolving and growing to meet consumer/client needs</li> <li>• Explore, validate and respect the choices of others</li> <li>• Awareness and respect of people's cultural backgrounds and how this influences their choice</li> <li>• A decision to change location will be supported and not alter one's housing journey (being sent to the bottom of the pile)</li> </ul>



### Accountability

Service providers in the sector are transparent about their capacity and how those services can be provided. That services do what they say they will do.

#### What accountability looks like

- Courage to be vulnerable
- Honest, transparent, and clear communications
- Identify and take ownership of mistakes. Reassess the situation
- Collaborate with people to find sustainable and accessible solutions.
- Ensure true stories are being told. Specific concepts, responses and opportunities are discussed, not vague or unconstructed opinions.



### Inclusion

People accessing housing and homelessness services experience a service model responsive to their individual needs. Services are welcoming to all, consider the complexities and differences in people's housing needs, and can provide a diverse range of solutions to meet those needs.

#### What inclusion looks like

- Having voice, choice, and agency in the decision-making process
- Participation and connection with other services that facilitate a person-centred response
- Learn from a diverse range of people and experiences



### Equity

Housing and homelessness service delivery is equitable, ensuring that everyone, particularly those with the highest needs, can participate in decision-making and access housing.

#### What equity looks like

- People have a voice and equal participation in contributing to society's social and economic development. People with lived experience have the right to participate in decisions made about them
- To have the same access to services, not to be made to feel the 'lowest of low' due to unforeseen circumstances
- Ensure everyone, particularly those with the highest needs, is provided with the appropriate skills, resources and opportunities required to participate and access housing
- Knowing that as changes occur in people's lives, there is wrap-around support to sustain them
- Advocacy
- A shift in power structures



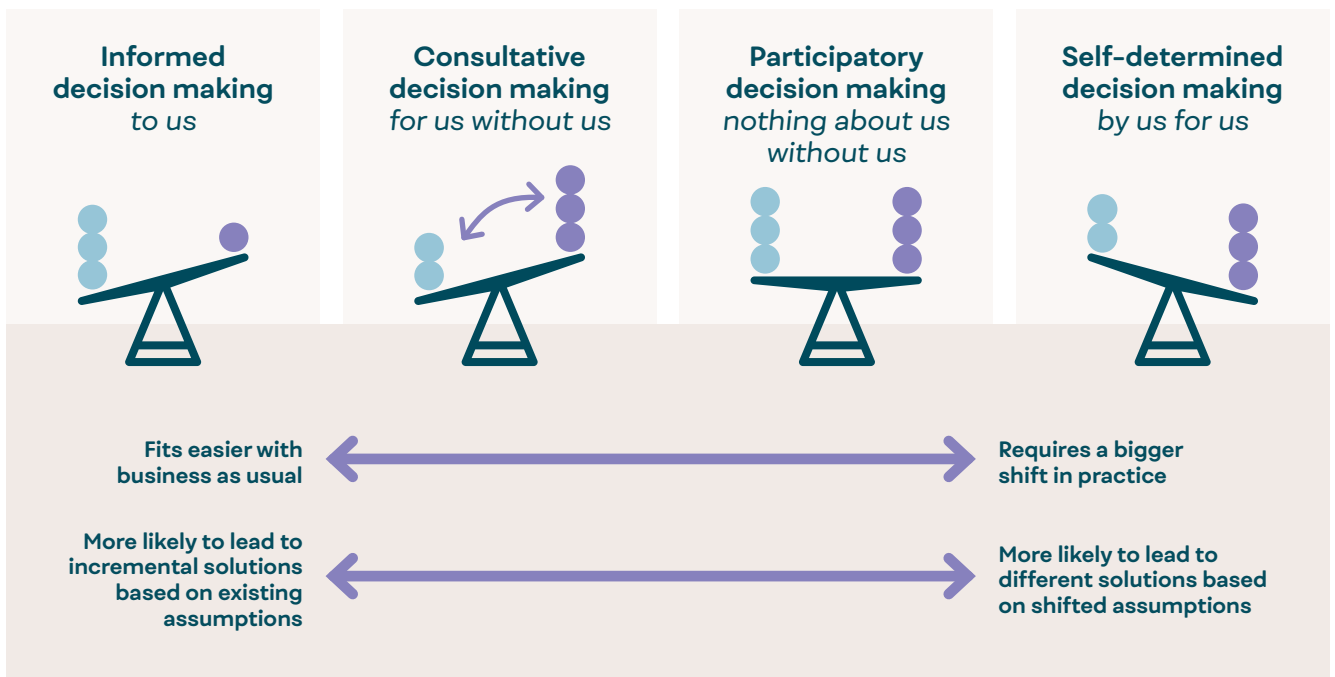


### Lived experience co-production in South Australia's Housing and Homelessness System

In this Framework, LEES approaches lived experience through the lens of co-production. A central theme of co-production is the idea that people who use services are hidden resources, not drains on the system. It is a way of working where service providers and people with current or past experiences with using services work together to reach a collective outcome. The approach is value-driven and built on the principle that those affected by a service are best placed to help design it. Ignoring these valuable resources makes services less efficient.<sup>vi</sup>

The Stories of co-production [video](#) by Involve<sup>vii</sup> describes the value of co-production in practice.

The diagram below represents how LEES views co-production for South Australia's Housing and Homelessness system:



Adapted from the Spectrum of Participation, The Australian Centre for Social Innovation.<sup>viii</sup>



## Lived Experience Engagement Spectrum for co-production

When developing this *Lived Experience Framework*, the Lived Experience Engagement Service (LEES) and Lived Experience Framework Reference Group (LEFRG) referred to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2 Federation) Public Participation Spectrum.<sup>ix</sup> IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with selecting the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. Using the language of those involved in developing this Framework, the chart below identifies what each level of engagement could look like for South Australia's Housing and Homelessness system, activities to consider and the conditions required for people with lived experience to feel comfortable when engaging with services.

South Australia's Housing and Homelessness system includes several organisations and diverse services. The range of people they work with is broad and varied, therefore, there is no single engagement method for lived experience participation. Engagement methods will change according to the situation, and the individuals' services are working with or seeking to work with. Regardless of the chosen engagement method, aligning the five *Lived Experience Principles* (see p.10–11) will keep the engagement activity focused.

All participation methods have their benefits and limitations. Considering risks and reviewing progress is important to ensure the chosen method's effectiveness and maintain the requisite duty of care. Whichever method is selected, the focus should be on doing this well and on each of the five Principles. The tools and resources referenced throughout this Framework are also to be used to ensure that facilitators and participants alike have a positive experience with the engagement activity.

To best use the chart on page 16–17, consider first the aim of the activity and work through the rows that sit beneath that column. For example, if what we are doing is to 'inform', then adopting activities that intend to 'empower' will frustrate and make redundant the output of the activity.





**"We don't have loving  
systems. Everything  
is fear based."**

*- Woman experiencing homelessness*



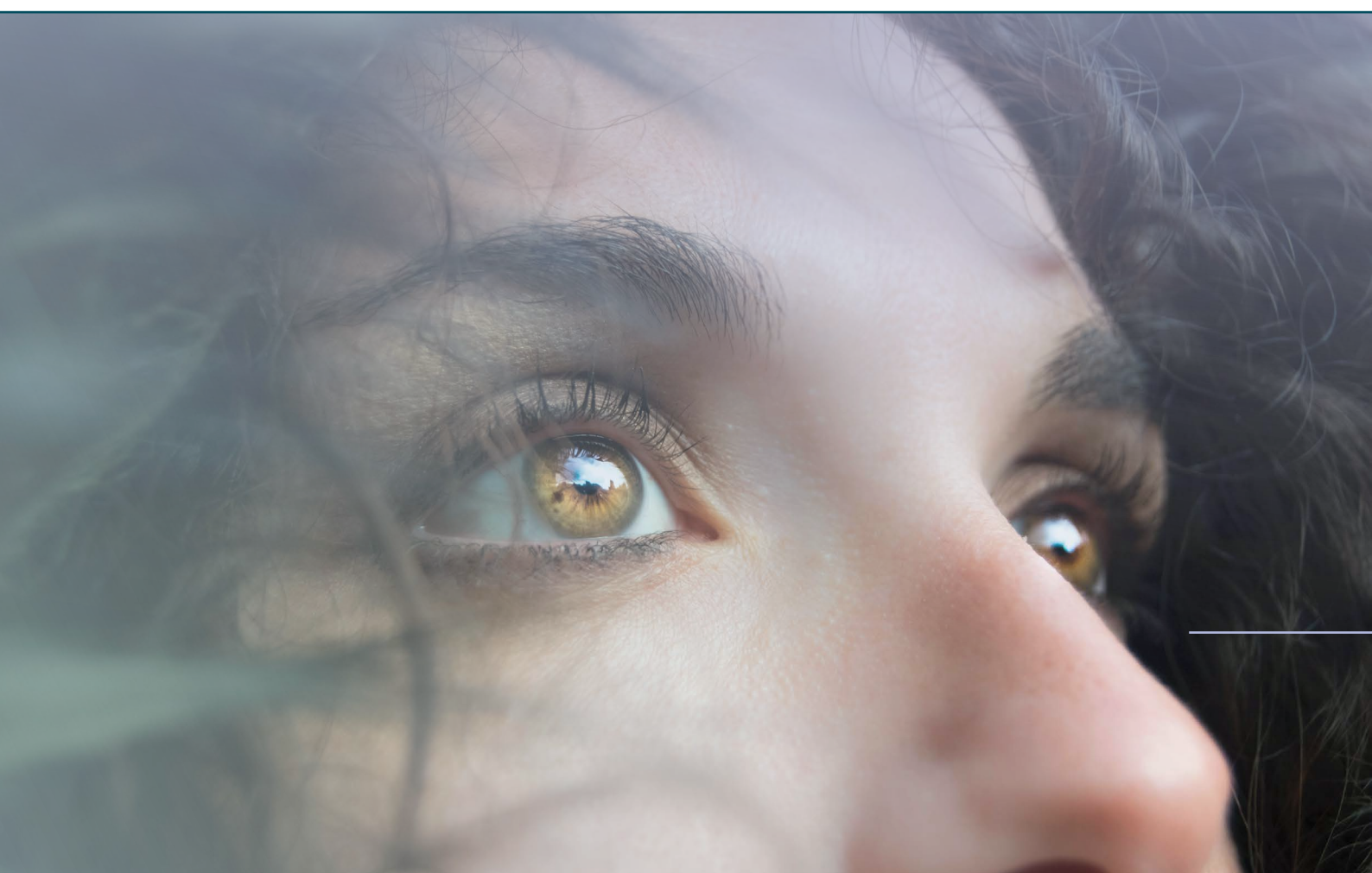




so you can

*The spectrum of lived experience engagement activities for co-production.*

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Aim	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist their understanding of issues, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Requesting feedback on decisions, plans, issues, solutions etc.	Work directly with people to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with people to make decisions. This includes creating alternatives/solutions and identifying the preferred solution	Final decision-making is in the hands of people with lived experience to implement what is decided
Promise	"We will keep you informed."	"We will listen and acknowledge your concerns and insights and provide feedback on how your views were used to influence decision making"	"We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decisions made"	"We will ask your advice and opinions and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible"	"What you decide will be implemented"
Activities to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online surveys</li> <li>• Information sessions</li> <li>• Factsheets and newsletters</li> <li>• Face-to-face meetings</li> <li>• Organisational websites</li> <li>• Research and advocacy reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• 1:1 interview</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Involvement in sector-wide projects</li> <li>• Paid participation in project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference groups</li> <li>• Advisory panels</li> <li>• Involvement in special projects</li> <li>• Co-design projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated or joint decision-making committees</li> <li>• Client-led programs or advisory boards</li> <li>• Partnership committees</li> </ul>





	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Conditions required for people with lived experience to feel comfortable when engaging with services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask people about their interests before sending information. This will ensure that people are actively informed</li> <li>Ensure information sessions are inclusive and responsive to audiences' needs. Sending emails should not be the only way to inform people</li> <li>Use catchy phrases to get people's attention</li> <li>Do not make assumptions as to levels of literacy or digital literacy, or access</li> <li>Ensure the information is in layperson's language/ easy</li> </ul> <p>English, translated and distributed via culturally responsive channels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the info session is at a specific location, provide people with transport support to get to the location</li> <li>Consider more interactive sessions over sending an email and assuming it will be read and understood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People need to be motivated to engage, so topics of consultation need to be on issues that affect people or topics they are interested in</li> <li>Offer people transport support if needed</li> <li>Provide alternative means of consultations. i.e., if people can't attend in person, create options for online, over the phone, outreach to locations in which they feel safe</li> <li>Be mindful of people's circumstances and offer to meet at a location of their choice</li> <li>Some people are not comfortable with being consulted in a group setting, offer one-on-one alternatives.</li> <li>Reassure people that their feedback is confidential and won't negatively affect current or future services they receive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When people are involved in a project, use language that is easily understood and reflective of cultural norms and practices</li> <li>Communicate with people at a level that makes them comfortable to talk without feeling embarrassed or feeling they don't belong</li> <li>Provide people with added training and support to feel comfortable and psychologically safe in a professional group setting. This includes addressing issues of accessibility</li> <li>Have a clear direction of what they are being involved in and what is coming out of it. This will ensure that people know what they are doing, what is expected of them and the achievable goals</li> <li>Provide parking, gift vouchers, accurate information about location and time and consistency</li> <li>Equal power to all being involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge that there are power dynamics, but when collaborating with people, power is shared equally</li> <li>Cultural awareness is very important when collaborating with Aboriginal peoples</li> <li>Collaborative spaces should be culturally safe for people</li> <li>Address people in a way that makes them feel valued as an individual</li> <li>Extra support for people to fully understand discussions at this level and equal representation of lived experience and professionals so that people don't feel overwhelmed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People should not be involved straight at an empowerment level. People need to have been engaged at a level before empowerment so that they don't feel like too much is being placed on their shoulders</li> <li>Empowerment should be seen as a goal people can achieve, not just a level of engagement. People involved at other levels should see empowerment as a goal to strive to</li> <li>To not feel threatened by the professionals at that level</li> <li>To have your expertise as valued as that of professionals</li> <li>Ensure people are supported through the whole engagement spectrum and ongoing debriefing before getting to the empowerment level</li> <li>Some might still need someone else to talk for them. i.e., speaking more of the professional language - to 'talk the talk'</li> <li>Participants are to be in a good position to make decisions for people, i.e., well connected with people who are being affected by the decisions</li> <li>Ensure that people are out of crisis mode and are well-placed to contribute and make decisions</li> <li>Use 'Plain English', user-friendly language and/or an interpreter service</li> </ul>

**Table 1: IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum and SYC's LERG and ALERG recommendations**

For engagement activities to be successful, facilitators must recognise the cultural and/or accessibility needs of people who identify as First Nations, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and people living with disabilities.



## Acknowledging power and vulnerability

There is often a significant power imbalance between professionals and those with lived experience when those with lived experience are from one or more marginalised groups (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), LGBTIQ+).

When embarking on any lived experience engagement activity, it is essential to recognise and acknowledge the existing power imbalances. It is the responsibility of those who have power (e.g., dominant culture, sexuality, gender, education, professional standing, wellness etc.) to create safety intentionally and actively for others by ensuring behaviours and language are sensitive and enabling, taking responsibility for equalising power when those who have power are reluctant to share it.

Asking people with lived experience to be open and honest in their participation can place them in a vulnerable position. People should always have the choice about if and when they participate, be free to opt out of participation at any time and be supported following any engagement activity.

This is particularly important when engaging with people who, due to past or current experiences or circumstances, may not feel able to say 'no' once they have given consent. Pay careful attention to preparing all participants, not just those intentionally present due to their lived experience, to create the environment for different perspectives to be heard and supported.

When inviting people with lived experience to participate, consider how you will create a safe, comfortable, and inviting environment for all participants. Are the meeting spaces or rooms where participants will visit friendly and welcoming? Will the participants easily be able to leave the room if they need to? Ask staff or sector representatives who may also attend to dress appropriately for the group. For example, to not attend in business suits or uniforms, to leave position titles 'at the door', and keep laptops and mobile phones off the table. It is also important to consider the ratio of staff to participants in the room.



## Addressing the power imbalance

The table below<sup>x</sup> provides some examples and reflective questions that can be used when engaging with individuals with lived experience to help identify and address power imbalances.

Steps to address	Considerations	Reflective questions
1. Understand the situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History of service experiences</li> <li>Cultural identity, background and needs</li> <li>Literacy skills</li> <li>Disability</li> <li>Intersectionality</li> <li>Age</li> <li>Current support services</li> <li>Eligibility for support services</li> <li>Experience of trauma</li> <li>Dependants</li> <li>Carers</li> <li>Access to local services</li> <li>Social and family context</li> </ul>	<p>Have previous experiences been positive or otherwise? What do the case files show?</p> <p>Are there particular direct worker characteristics that might be preferred (for example, age, gender or cultural background)?</p> <p>Could the person or group lose supports, entitlements or benefits due to their participation (actual or perceived)?</p> <p>Is it possible that the person or group might feel pressured to take part in an engagement activity even if it might not be in their best interests?</p> <p>Are there other power imbalances, for example, within family or carer relationships?</p> <p>Have you asked the person or group about the above?</p> <p>How will you manage the conflicting views and opinions of different participants?</p> <p>Have you thought about unintended bias? An example of an unintended bias is not hosting consultations in various country towns when conducting a focus group on a statewide issue such as motel use. Or not seeking the views of children accompanying their parents into homelessness but hosting focus groups for parents/adults only.</p>
2. Empower (where possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing accessible information and resources, including information about privacy and confidentiality</li> <li>Training, orientation or skill development</li> <li>Location of meetings, for example, in culturally safe spaces</li> <li>Accessibility of information, systems and processes</li> </ul>	<p>What information or support would help the person or group to have their voice heard?</p> <p>Are there other groups, services or resources that could help, for example, attending with an advocate or support person?</p> <p>Are there decisions that the person or group could have control over but doesn't currently? Can that be changed, and by whom (i.e., can it be changed to benefit participation in this instance)?</p> <p>Is it possible to create an opportunity for a person or group to express themselves when family/carers are not there?</p> <p>Have you assumed what people need instead of asking them?</p> <p>What will clients gain from what happens, for example, new skills, protective behaviours or recognition?</p>
3. Tailor the approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of technology</li> <li>Different ways to have a say - in person, anonymously, verbally, in writing</li> <li>Be clear about the questions you want answered</li> <li>The option of a support person</li> <li>Follow up</li> </ul>	<p>Could you work with the person or group to plan and design what you're going to do?</p> <p>What sort of technology or supports, such as advocacy or accessible resources, are available that might help?</p> <p>How will you check in to make sure what you're doing is working and that everyone is OK?</p> <p>Do you need to make sure counselling or other psychological support is available?</p> <p>How will you provide feedback to the person or group and keep them up to date?</p>

Table 2: As adapted by DHHS Client Voice Framework for Community Services and SYC's LEES recommendations



## Recognition, payment and reimbursement

Many people participate in feedback sessions, forums, or groups as they value the opportunity to “give something back” and share their experiences to help others, so volunteer their time to complete questionnaires or attend meetings. It is important to always welcome hearing from people with lived experience who can contribute in this way and demonstrate that their contribution is acknowledged and valued. People should benefit from sharing their expertise; this doesn't always have to be in the form of monetary payment, but in some cases, this is the most appropriate and respectful way. For example, people involved in Reference Groups or Advisory Groups should not be out of pocket for expenses related to their participation. It is important to remember that reimbursement of costs associated with participation is different from payment and recognition for time and expertise, so both should be considered separately.

Paid participation should be considered whenever people share their experiences for the benefit of improving housing or homelessness services. This refers to their contribution over and above routine client feedback on service delivery. Examples include participation in the media, fundraising events, sector Roundtable or Network meetings, and research or advocacy campaigns. Paying people is one of the ways to recognise the valuable and specialised contribution people make when providing their insights from lived experience. However, it is not the only one.

### Other forms of valuing contribution include:

- Providing a reference that can subsequently be used for job or training applications
- Skill development and capability building: goals and outcomes can be established with the person or group beforehand, and an approach agreed
- Network building and the chance to build ongoing relationships: This could be formal or informal, with the desired outcomes established at the outset
- Catering and a verbal acknowledgement
- A written thank-you letter
- A gift voucher/card

Any remuneration provided must be negotiated and agreed upon by all parties prior to the commencement of activities.

The LEES Participant Payment Guide (refer to *Participant Payment Guide* on pages 31–33) was co-designed with the LERG and ALERG and in consultation with the sector to support and provide guidance to the sector. It should be referred to when seeking input from people with lived experience in a range of activities initiated by a housing or homelessness service for which they can receive payment.



## Enabling conditions for embedding lived experience across the sector

The term *lived experience* can be understood as the experience(s) of people on whom a social justice issue, or combination of issues, has had a direct impact – the raw data. Whereas Lived Expertise is the knowledge, insights, understanding, and wisdom gathered through lived experience<sup>xi</sup> – the distillation, reflection, and intentional application of knowledge for impact at the individual, organisational and systemic levels.

The practice of drawing from lived experience and applying lived expertise requires an environment that enables people not just to share their experiences to highlight problems, but to apply their insights to imagine solutions to create a positive impact through genuine participation in decision-making. The conditions identified below were co-developed in consultation with people with lived experience of homelessness and are essential for lived experience expertise to function effectively at a systemic, organisational, and individual level.

### Level 1: Systemic (strategic) level conditions that enable lived experience participation

#### 1. Basic understanding of lived experience

Engaging lived experience expertise requires an understanding of lived experience, its functions, and the impact it can have in strategic decision-making around service design and delivery.

For authenticity, this understanding should be consistent at all levels of the housing and homelessness system.

##### Key things to consider are:

- a. How ready or willing is the system to adopt the definition of lived experience as defined in this Framework?
- b. Is there a recognised and shared responsibility for systems change that is reflected in non-discriminatory policies?
- c. Is the importance of lived experience in achieving effective systems change understood across all levels (governance to frontline)?
- d. How ready is the system to include people with lived expertise to be equally respected as the subject matter experts currently at the table employed and empowered to make systems level change?

#### 2. Power Sharing

People with lived experience are often discouraged from applying their expertise due to the power imbalance that exists between lived experience and academic knowledge.<sup>xiii</sup> Addressing this power imbalance sets the foundation for lived experience expertise to function effectively. For example, addressing people as their official roles places emphasis on the power in their role, which may be threatening for people with lived expertise, with no formal title reflective of their expertise.

##### Key things to consider are:

- a. How will people applying their lived experience expertise be recognised and acknowledged for their contribution?
- b. Where does change happen? What role or scope of influence does lived expertise have in overall decision making?

### 3. Identify the relevant expertise required

To ensure that working with lived experience is not tokenistic, the lived experience expertise being sought needs to be relevant to the topic at hand. People's experiences are unique to them, so there also needs to be a broad base of representation from across the system. One voice or one person's experience cannot speak to all experiences. A person having lived experience of housing insecurity or homelessness does not mean they have experienced all facets.

#### Key things to consider are:

- a. What experience, expertise, knowledge or insight is being sought?
- b. How best to source those with the relevant experience and capacity to reflect and apply their lived expertise?
- c. How can the system best work together to source and support people with the experiences you seek to learn from?

### 4. Define roles, outcomes and expectations clearly

Given the many functions that lived experience expertise can serve, activities involving people with lived experience need to be clearly defined. Ensure that people involved understand the level of commitment required to participate so they can plan ahead. Also, consider the resources that will be made available to participants, the role they will occupy, their level of influence and the remuneration involved. From a systems perspective, being consistent and adopting good practice will enhance the likelihood of people with lived experience being willing and enabled to be genuinely involved.

#### Key things to consider are:

- a. Is the activity a short-term, long-term, or one-off involvement?
- b. How will the role's functions and responsibilities be described? Be clear on its scope
- c. What practical and professional resources are required for the role?
- d. Are the goals of the lived experience engagement activity in line with the personal goals of the lived experience expert?
- e. What outcomes will be used to measure progress? Will they be tangible or less tangible?
- f. How will those involved be informed of the outcome of their involvement?

## What embedded lived experience looks like at a systemic level

There needs to be a shared responsibility for systems changes that are reflected in non-discriminatory policies. When it is embedded, the housing and homeless system will evolve with the following:

- Innovative and flexible problem-solving tailored to the needs of people
- Lived experience representation and involvement in decision making and leadership at all levels
- Reduction, if not elimination, of 'system's harm'

## LEVEL 2: Organisational level conditions that support lived experience expertise

### 1. Offer person-centred environments

To be inclusive of lived experience expertise, organisations need to offer person-centred environments that allow for flexibility. This includes being able to adapt physically and procedurally to the needs of people with lived experience. These changes may look different depending on the work, role, and person.

#### Key things to consider are:

- a. Is the person with lived experience currently in crisis, or has there been sufficient time and healing for them to reflect and develop insight from their experiences?
- b. Is there a space more conducive to enabling the conversations to happen?
- c. What organisational jargon or norms exist which may alienate people from participating?
- d. What power does the person with lived expertise hold if they are still reliant on the system?

### 2. Organisational Leadership

The attitudes of senior leadership towards lived experience expertise significantly impact the efficacy of lived experience in practice. A commitment to lived experience is often recognised through lived experience representation in leadership, equal remuneration for lived experience designated roles and non-designated roles, valuing equally those with personal expertise and learned expertise, provision of practice reflection and formal supervision and a culture of supportive leadership and operational management.

#### Key things to consider are:

- a. How is lived experience reflected in the organisation's mission and values?
- b. Is there lived experience expertise in leadership or management?
- c. What is the commitment to lived experience?
- d. How is leadership showing this commitment?

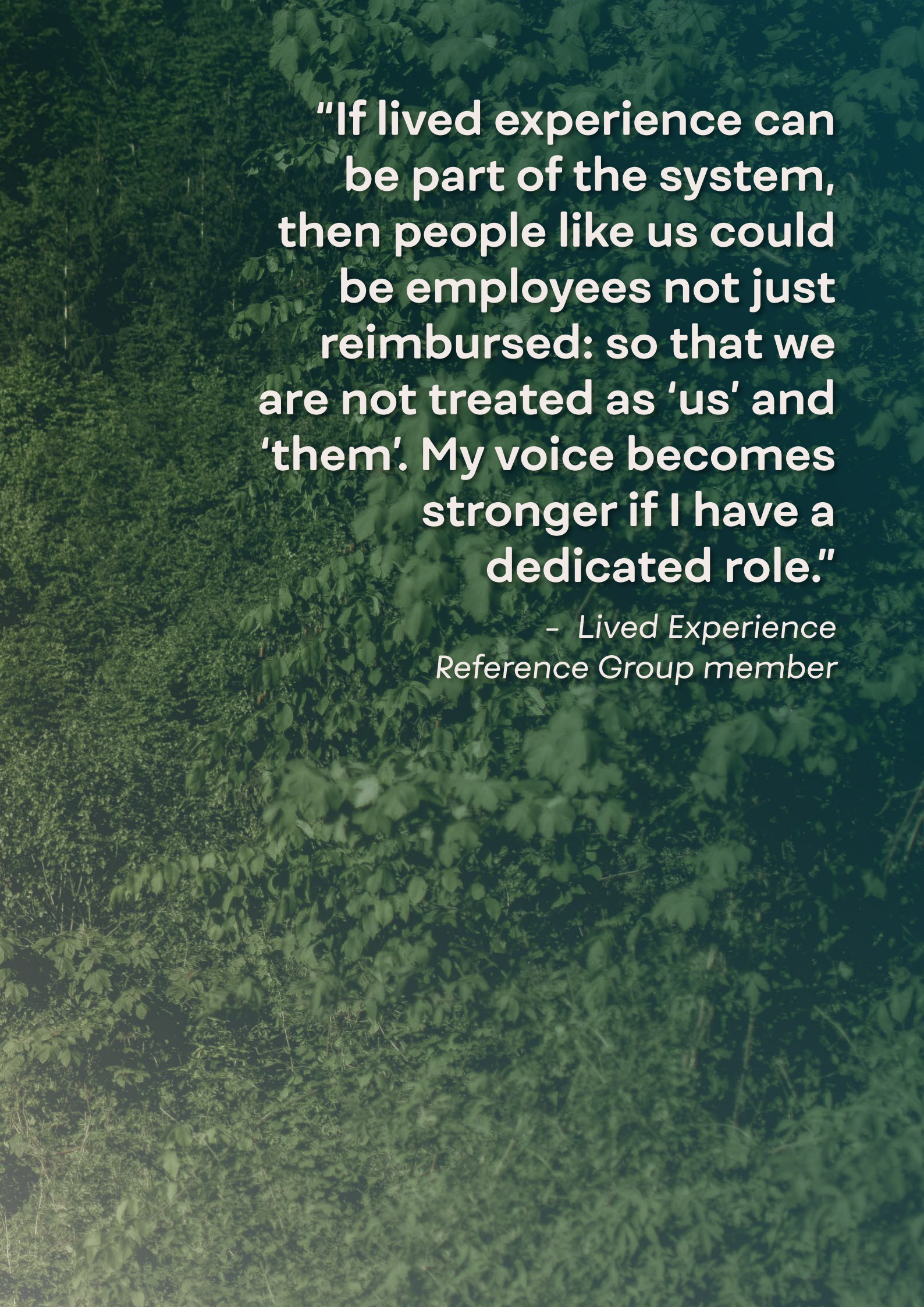
### 3. Feedback Mechanism

Having clear and transparent feedback mechanisms and shared accountability for lived experience engagement activities is critical to actively demonstrate the value of lived experience. Organisations need to be clear on the scope of influence they hold by way of their power to affect the outcome being sought as a result of the activity. Feedback mechanisms need to clarify what will be done with the information gathered, reflect back to participants what has been heard and interpreted from the engagement activity and be resourced to follow up with participants about what the ultimate outcome was from the consultation.









**"If lived experience can  
be part of the system,  
then people like us could  
be employees not just  
reimbursed: so that we  
are not treated as 'us' and  
'them'. My voice becomes  
stronger if I have a  
dedicated role."**

*- Lived Experience  
Reference Group member*



so you can

**Key things to consider are:**

- a. Is there a feedback mechanism?
- b. Is the feedback mechanism accessible and appropriate? i.e., Requesting online feedback for people who have no access to the internet or are not digitally literate is ineffective.
- c. Is there scope to invite and incorporate feedback and edits on a draft report of the consultations?
- d. Is there scope to invite and incorporate feedback and edits on the final work product (for example, if the consultation informed a journal article, briefing paper or report)?
- e. Reflect on the feedback provided during the consultation. How can your organisation adapt practices in response to what was heard and learnt?

**What embedded lived experience looks like at an organisational level:**

- Conditions that support trauma-informed services and a thriving lived experience workforce
- Innovative and effective housing solutions that reflect shared knowledge, learnings and insights
- Deep listening and understanding for person-centred responses that are transparent regarding the needs, barriers, limitations, and opportunities for improvement
- Positive outcomes through improved staff morale and practice



*A little space to be creative*

## LEVEL 3: Individual level conditions that enable lived experience expertise to function effectively

This section highlights the enabling conditions that sit around each level in the Spectrum of Engagement. These conditions ensure that people with lived experience feel safe, welcomed and supported to contribute their expertise at each level and that the conditions provided for each individual align with the function and purpose of the lived experience engagement activity.

### 1. Inform

- a. Be aware of people's interests before sending information. This will ensure people are actively informed.
- b. Make information sessions interactive with succinct and simple information that is easy to understand.
- c. Have information in different languages and use catchy phrases to get people's attention.
- d. Have information in other forms such as pictures, Easy Read documents, infographics or in audio format.
- e. If the information session is at a specific location, offer to support people with transport (such as paying for parking, petrol or offering transport).
- f. Receiving an invitation is important in invoking feelings of choice and exclusivity, not just another survey sent to all.

### 2. Consult

- a. Ensure people are consulted on issues that affect them or issues they have interests in.
- b. Offer people reimbursement (refer to Participant Payment Guide on pages 31–33) for their time and assistance with transportation if the consultation is at a designated location.
- c. Provide an alternative to face-face consultation, e.g., telephone, online etc.
- d. Respond to peoples' feedback during the consultation with empathy and appreciation of their perspective rather than react with a rationale of why things are not working.
- e. Ensure people know that the feedback provided will not affect the service they are receiving.
- f. Provide opportunities to meet people where they are.

### 3. Involve

- a. Allow preparation time and send people essential information before involving them in activities.
- b. Communicate with participants at a level and language that does not 'go over their head'. i.e., make it comfortable to talk or ask questions without feeling embarrassed about not understanding and offer clarifying responses to all questions.
- c. Assist people with skill building and provide the required training and support to help them contribute effectively.
- d. Have a suggestion box or place where people can log their thoughts. This could be about compliments, complaints or feedback. This will enable a choice of anonymity.
- e. Be clear about the direction and expectations of people involved in activities and the requirements in terms of time.
- f. Ensure people feel equal power in group settings.
- g. Offer people reimbursement for their time and assistance with transportation or other support.

#### 4. Collaborate

- a. To avoid tokenism and to create an environment of support, have a minimum of two people with lived experience (one person is not enough representation at a table full of professionals). For example, at a workshop, ask people where they would like to sit, offering to have a table of people fulfilling a lived experience role as well as the option to be dispersed across the room.
- b. Create culturally safe spaces and have cultural awareness when collaborating with people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and people of diverse cultural and language groups.
- c. Keep people informed regularly and address them in an appropriate way.
- d. Demonstrate trust, confidentiality, and a purpose.
- e. Provide participants the option to be included in some tasks and not in others without them having to explain the rationale for their choice of task(s).
- f. Consider how extra support can be provided for people to fully understand discussions, taking into account 'industry speak' and assumed knowledge by others in the room.
- g. Remind people of the scope of influence the engagement activity has; be honest and transparent about the decisions that they can or cannot influence.
- h. Offer people reimbursement for their time and assistance with transportation or other support.

#### 5. Empower

- a. Be overt in demonstrating how lived experience expertise is as valued as professional expertise.
- b. Engage people over time across the levels of engagement prior to 'Empower' to ensure participation and decision-making skills required at the level of Empower have been developed through previous engagement.
- c. Ensure people empowered to make decisions for others are rightly positioned to do so. i.e., people are well connected with decision makers or were selected to represent those affected by decisions made.
- d. For a participant representing a group of people with lived experience, ensure this participant has met with the group prior to the consultation and has been enabled by that group to represent their collective views. Assist this person to follow up throughout and following the consultation.
- e. Be mindful of the role of power. Ensure people with lived experience do not feel threatened by professionals involved in this level of engagement by using inclusive, respectful and user-friendly language with minimal use of industry jargon and acronyms.



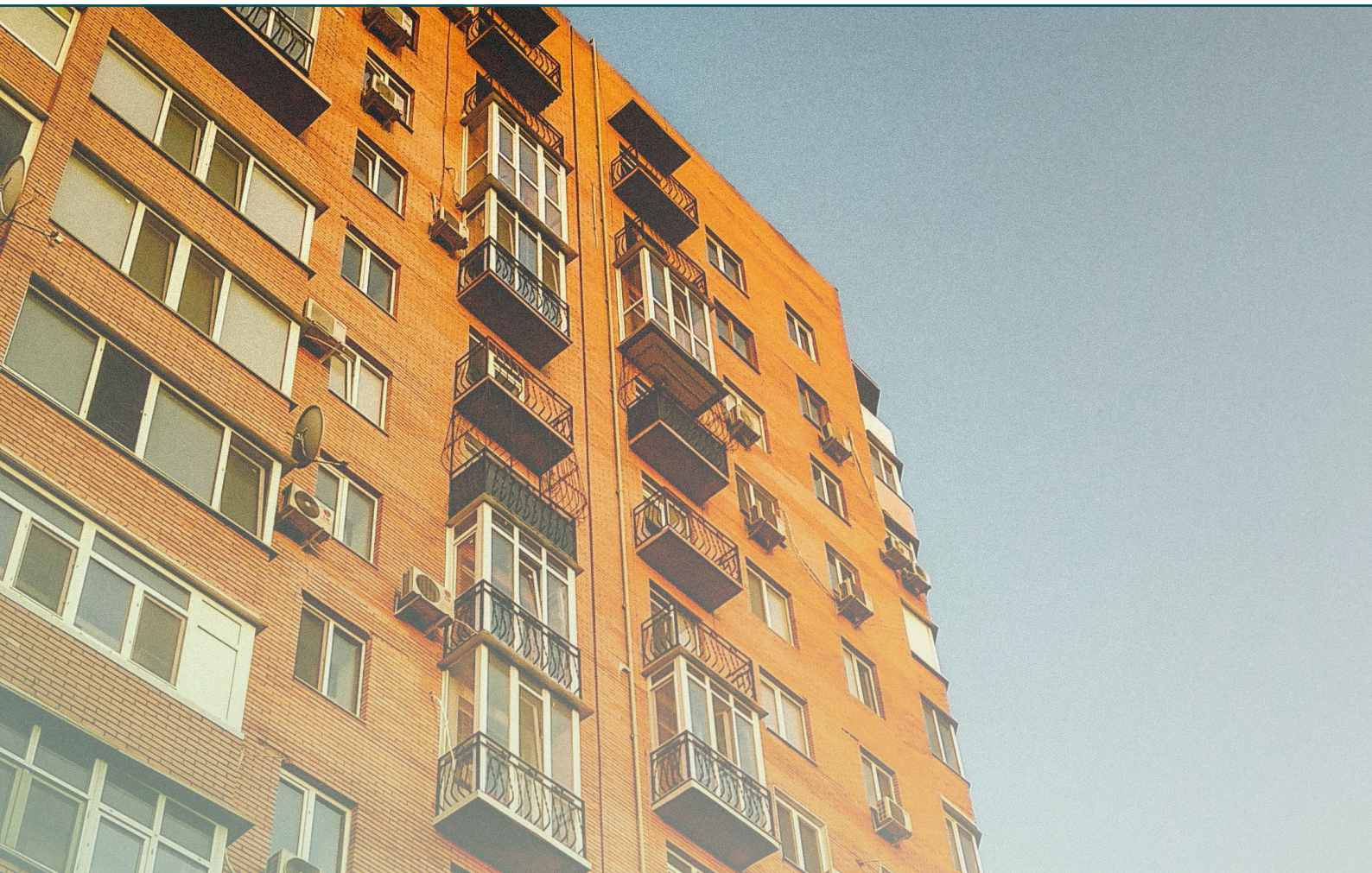
## What embedded lived experience looks like at an individual level:

*A sense of agency amongst people accessing services as well as those working within service delivery, creating a better experience of housing support services where:*

- Empathy, accountability, and authentic advocacy is created from the exchange of learnings, knowledge and insights from lived experience.
- Actions are accountable to the experiences being had.
- Advocacy is authentic and accountable to the shared lived experience.
- Listening empathetically to hear what is needed allows people to help create and be part of solutions relevant to their experience and needs.
- Listening with empathy empowers people to tell their stories, which in turn drives authentic advocacy.
- Advocacy based on individual needs creates a more accessible system.
- There is clarity and transparency in processes and outcomes.

Part 1 of *The Lived Experience Framework* illustrates guiding principles and best practice scenarios in engaging and embedding lived experience. It highlights the value of embedding the unique perspectives that lived experience provides to ensure housing and homelessness services and the system, reflect the needs of those for whom the system exists.

It is intended for Part 1 to be read in conjunction with *Part 2: A Practice Guide for Lived Experience Engagement*.







# Lived Experience Engagement Resources

## Participant Payment Guide

### Valuing lived experience participation A guide for reimbursement

This resource was developed by the Lived Experience Engagement Service (LEES) as a guide for Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and the housing sector when engaging people with lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness. This resource is to be regarded as a guide for reimbursement when lived experience is being utilised. The aim is to create consistency across the housing and homelessness sector based on best practice approaches to valuing lived experience expertise. As such, for those organisations with a pre-existing policy or approach to remuneration, we ask for this guide to take precedence.

#### Purpose

This payment guide was developed to ensure lived experience participants and their contribution within the SHS and housing sector are recognised, valued and appropriately remunerated for their expertise, contribution and time.

*The guide will help people engaging lived experience expertise to:*

1. Recognise who is eligible to be remunerated for their contribution.
2. Acknowledge the value of lived experience.
3. Reimburse people appropriately with clear prior arrangements.

#### Audience

*This payment guide may be helpful for:*

1. People with a lived experience of housing stress and homelessness, according to the LEES definition developed in partnership with LE participants.<sup>1</sup>
2. People who are currently or have previously accessed housing and homelessness services.
3. Service providers engaging with people who have lived experience of housing stress and homelessness.
4. Funding bodies for organisations providing housing and homelessness services.

*The guide does not apply to:*

1. Housing and homelessness service employees.
2. Family members or people providing support to persons in housing stress in a non-professional (paid) capacity.

This guide does not apply to the payment of salaried peer workers in service delivery roles.

<sup>1</sup> Lived experience of housing stress and homelessness is having your sense of identity, life chances, safety, stability or wellbeing threatened, due to insecurity of appropriate housing. In this context "appropriate" is defined as: Stable housing (security of tenure), Accessibility (specific needs of people are taken into account), Affordability (it does not compromise a person's ability to afford other necessities in life), Location (access to physical, social and economic supports), Habitability (fit to live in), Culturally appropriate (inclusive housing policies free of discrimination). The definition acknowledges that lived experience goes beyond the loss or lack of a physical shelter.



## Paid and Unpaid Activities

### Unpaid lived experience engagement activities

#### 1. Informing clients and community

This relates to activities intended to inform clients generally or focused on providing information to people with lived experience about services or changes in the housing or homelessness sector.

When information is provided to people and largely does not require their input, the target audience is not expected to be remunerated. For example, attending information sessions, events, open invitations and the like.

#### 2. Short unplanned participation

Participation in short phone interviews or written/online surveys will not normally be reimbursed.

In scenarios where feedback is sought face-to-face without prior arrangement (for example, at the conclusion of an appointment with a paid sector employee (e.g., case worker) or at a 'listening post', appreciation for participation may be demonstrated with refreshments or merchandise.

People with lived experience who provide voluntary feedback on an unplanned basis (e.g., service feedback or complaints) will often not be reimbursed.

#### Paid lived experience engagement activities

People with lived experience ("lived experience participants") are to be reimbursed for activities that involve a pre-arranged time and activity, and where participation of lived experience is required or desired by the host. Reimbursement for participation may be adjusted depending on the expectations and time involved, the level of expertise required of participants, and the level of anticipated contribution.

The following are recommendations for organisations within the housing and SHS sector to consider when making decisions around reimbursement. These recommendations have been adapted from other frameworks and policies such as WACOSS, NDIA, and SA Health.<sup>2</sup>

Activities that LE expertise may be required to participate in include, but are not limited to:

- Lived Experience Reference or Advisory groups (one-off or ongoing)
- One-on-one interviews
- A focus group (or a series of focus groups)
- A participatory project (i.e., co-designing a service, an evaluation of a project)
- Stakeholder workshops
- A recurring governance role (this may be compensated at a higher level depending on scope, experience and responsibility involved)
- A panel discussion/public speaking event/media event

#### Principles for reimbursement

1. Reimbursement should be negotiated and agreed on by lived experience participants prior to the activity to ensure conditions are agreed upon by all involved.
2. Where there is a need for out-of-session time commitments, prior reading, or other requirements, this time is to be recognised and remunerated appropriately.

3. Lived experience advocates always have the autonomy to refuse to participate in an activity or to undertake advocacy/leadership opportunities with any group regardless of whether payment is being provided for participation.
4. The payment recommendations below are the minimum recommended level of payment for the participation of lived experience expertise. If organisations have the necessary resources and commitment to recognise higher levels of expertise and capacity (such as governance, leadership, and advocacy contributions), they are encouraged to do so.

**Note:** Some LE roles can require very high-level skill sets, including sitting on governing bodies, speaking at high profile events, or leadership positions with groups/projects. It is important to recognise this expertise and contribution. Parties can negotiate and come to an agreement about what is appropriate compensation.

5. In cases where LE participants have expressed barriers to participation and if funds allow, participants may be provided with (or reimbursed for) additional support, including accessibility equipment and translators.

## Payment recommendations

1. Wherever possible, remuneration will be at a minimum hourly rate for a minimum of two hours. At certain times and for specific purposes (such as short, once-off consultations or interviews), this may be appropriately adjusted with the consent of both parties.
2. Reimbursement may take many forms with negotiation and mutual agreement, including cash payments, bank transfers, or reimbursement in the form of gift cards. Sometimes lived experience participants will not wish to be compensated through monetary payments, as it can have other financial or tax implications. Lived experience participants, where practicable, are to be given a choice between receiving EFT transfers or gift card remuneration.
3. Where possible, over and above any remuneration for attendance, lived experience participants will be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, particularly travel and parking costs. This will be agreed upon ahead of time, particularly for regional travel costs. Generally, refreshments and meals will be provided as appropriate.
4. Minimum remuneration for lived experience expertise will be as follows:
  - a. \$40 per hour for up to 2 hours
  - b. \$120 for up to 4 hours
  - c. \$200 day rate (up to 8 hours)
  - d. Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses paid (travel and parking).
  - e. If meals are not provided, additional reimbursement of meals at \$20 per meal if participation is for more than 4 hours.

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Be ♡  
THE  
CHANGE

For ongoing leadership, training and support in embedding lived experience into service delivery and system reform, to provide feedback on *The Lived Experience Framework*, or to become involved with the Lived Experience Engagement Service's Lived Experience Reference Group or Aboriginal Lived Experience Reference Group, please contact [livedexperience@syc.net.au](mailto:livedexperience@syc.net.au).

