



Moments of impact

Local Peer Work stories

Regional Peer Network reflections - Vicki

I don't know if you've ever had the privilege to sit in a room full of Peer Workers?

But there is no experience quite like it.

The unconditional regard, kindness and support is an energy that cradles each person in the room. Each of us has our own niche, meaning there's no need to compete, our Peer Network Meetings are a celebration of both individualism and the collective, where we share news and updates, things we've learned and services we've come across.

There is a power in us all coming together which helps us to never lose sight of "our why". We are constantly reminded why we come together, why we are in these roles in the first place and that we contribute to something bigger.

Each time I leave a Peer Network Meeting, I feel like my cup has been refilled with a sense of connection, hope, and inspiration to share with the people I work with.

The first time I ever attended a Peer Network meeting was in December 2024 and I was so anxious to go. But when I got there I quickly realised this was not like any other meeting.

This meeting was just a few weeks before Christmas, a time that can be really hard for people, and being in Peer Work we are very aware of just how challenging some people find this holiday.

As a network we took some of the time we had together to write Christmas cards to send to those who would spend the holidays in our local inpatient wards.

During this activity, it felt like we were passing the flame. Even though this year we are ok, we are aware of what it feels like to be in darkness or be feeling outcast or unworthy or not see anyone you love at Christmas and we got to be a part of sending words of hope and solidarity, support and fellowship into institutions that have not always had love and care.



It made me so happy, after all the years of going to meetings in a corporate world, to be a part of a grassroots initiative with incredible realness. To be in a space where one person means a lot and where one Peer Worker can make a difference, even if it's through just one letter, that was far more profound than other spaces I had been a part of.

The networks have also helped me with my Peer Work in a practical way.

I was working with a consumer, and as with a lot of people, when you are in a situation where you don't have food to eat and are struggling to make ends meet there is often a feeling of burden and shame. She finally said

"I'm really hungry and I don't have any food in my fridge."

After the phone call I went through my notes from a recent Peer Network meeting where we had discussed the social determinants of mental ill-health and we all co-created a list of places where people could find things like connection and lunches during the Christmas holidays if people had no one to spend it with.

And I remembered a Peer Worker talking about the good work that was happening at Bellambi Neighbourhood centre to support food insecurity.

So with this gem - one I hadn't come across before in my work - I reached back out to the consumer and we arranged a time to head over together.

Wonderfully, she went home with two bags of food that day.

There are many moments like this that get to happen because

our networks help us share a collective knowledge of an everchanging ecosystem of services.

I am incredibly proud to be a part of something that is so heart-centred that is not just about tuning practice but also having a real impact.

Being a part of it is such a beautiful nourishing experience.

