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2023 Symposium

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Exploring And Building The Role Of Peer Workers In Supporting Healthy Lifestyle

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Our team

- Prof Jenny Bowman
- Jessica Whitfield (Peer Worker & researcher)
- Sophie Love (PhD student)
- Holly Winchester (research assistant)
- Vibeke Hansen (Qualitative expert)

Steering Group:

- People with lived experience (members of the Hunter New England and Mid North Coast Lived Experience Units)
- Peer workers & workforce managers (across Central Coast, Hunter New England and Mid North Coast)
- Researchers



Health
Central Coast
Local Health District



Health
Hunter New England
Local Health District

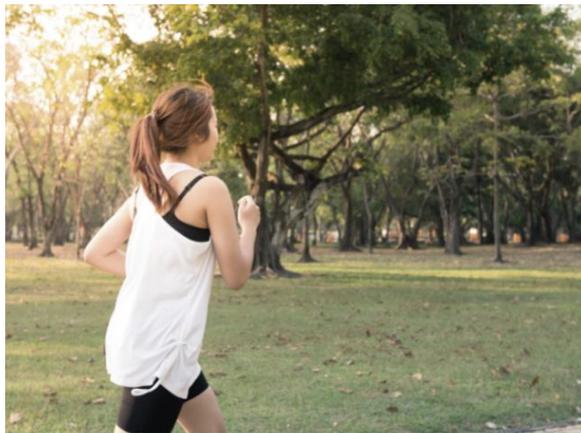


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Potential for prevention

Supporting healthy lifestyle, including changes to modifiable lifestyle behaviours:

- Smoking
- Nutrition (not enough fruit and veg)
- Alcohol (harmful levels of consumption)
- Physical activity (not enough activity)
- Poor sleep



Implementing Strategies to Increase Support for Healthy Lifestyle

People living with a mental health condition:

- Are interested and motivated to improve health and lifestyle behaviours
- Want and expect support from mental health services

Interventions to increase delivery of healthy lifestyle support:

- Different settings: hospital, community mental health, community-managed organisations
- Tools and resources can support health professionals/clinicians to provide this care



The role of peer workers

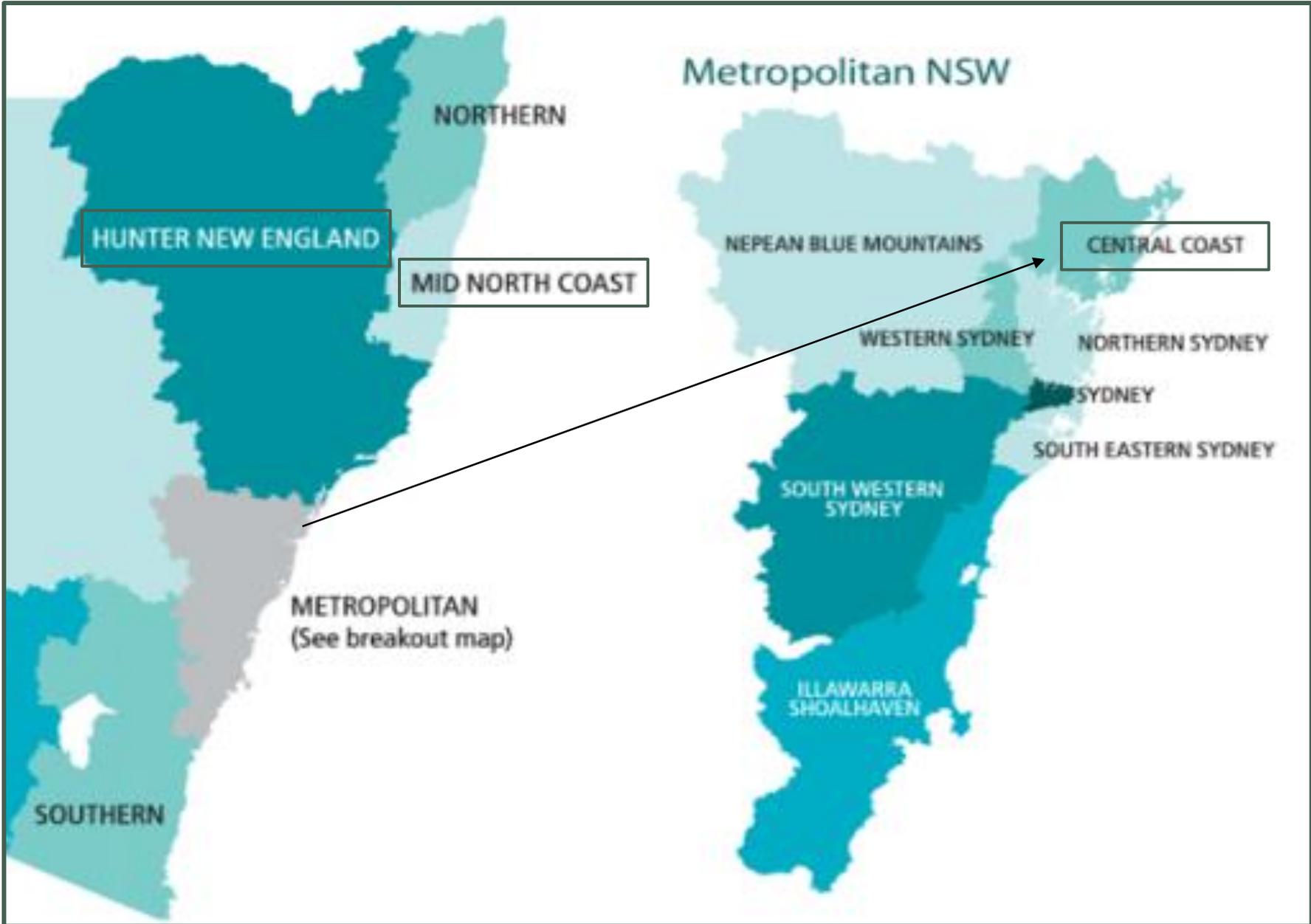
- Increasing part of the mental health workforce
- Powerful **role models** for behaviour change, leading by example
- **Walk alongside** – share own experience of personal recovery; supporting resilience, connection, and empowerment

Peer-delivered healthy lifestyle support

- Systematic review (Coles, et al. 2022): 10 peer delivered physical health interventions
 - Most trials found significant improvements in at least one health outcome, especially in trials targeting physical activity
- Translate findings into initiatives to enable the peer workforce to support healthy lifestyle



Research aim: co-design strategies for peer-workers to build capacity to provide healthy lifestyle support



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STAGE 1:
Understand current experiences and perspectives of people with lived experience and peer workers

Survey of people accessing government mental health services

Interviews with peer workers

Methods: Stage 1 – understanding experiences and perspectives

Surveys, interviews and groups: peer workers and people with lived experience

Value and benefits of peer-delivered lifestyle support

What lifestyle support might peer workers already be providing

What support would people like to receive?

How do peer workers feel about providing this support?

what do people receiving the support think about it (e.g., helpful?)

Stage 1 – learnings so far

- Peer workers have an important role in supporting healthy lifestyle:
 - relatable, help the person feel understood
 - Knowledge of the unique challenges
 - Time – to listen and to help
- Being mindful of each person's unique recovery journey
- Different perspectives about how much healthy lifestyle support is part of current practice

Stage 1 – learnings so far

- Peer workers would like more training/resources e.g.,
 - Conversation starters/questionnaire
 - Resource outlining relevant services/supports
 - Peer groups: Peer-to-peer; Allied Health
- Considerations
 - Difference in experience e.g., type of mental health condition, health needs and experiences
 - How to provide healthy lifestyle support while keeping with the defining features of peer work

Stage 2 - workshops

- Workshops bringing together peer workers, people with lived experience and managers
- Consider and share experiences; including findings from Stage 1

Co-design:

- What should peer-delivered healthy lifestyle support look like?
- What strategies would enable peer workers to provide this?
 - E.g., Training
 - E.g., Resources/guides

Significance and next steps

- Recognise and build the role of peer workers in government mental health settings
- Contribute to reduced inequity of chronic physical disease
- Future research to evaluate the strategies

Thank you!

Acknowledgements:

ALIVE National Centre

All the members of our Steering Group

HNE Lived Experience Participation Unit

MNC Consumer Advisory Council

HNE, MNC and CC peer workforce and managers



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