



MHACA
Mental Health
Association of
Central Australia



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Three Birds with One Stone

Building Workforce Capacity to Support Remote Aboriginal People
Access the NDIS



Mental Health Matters



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet , the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.



MHACA, The Mental Health Association of Central Australia, is based in Alice Springs. Alice is a town of about 25,000 people in the middle of the desert, at the heart of the continent. It services a vast region stretching to and across the South Australian and WA borders. Workforce turnover is very high and the cost of living is exorbitant. But it is a stunning place to live, a wonderfully diverse community where innovation and creativity thrive.

MHACA offers a day program, home based outreach, tenancy support, care coordination, suicide prevention focused mental health promotion; and Suicide Story a remote community capacity building program developed and delivered by Aboriginal people.

Over 50% of MHACA's clients are Aboriginal people from a broad range of communities and language groups. The service currently offers very basic services that are not available to many participants in their own homes – access to shower and laundry facilities, clean clothes, a comfortable place to sit and relax, access to computers and the internet.



The Three Birds

Culturally appropriate assistance to access NDIS

Building a peer workforce

Creating a pathway to training and
employment for Aboriginal people

Access to the NDIS is not easy for people of Aboriginal background and others with mental health difficulties in remote settings. The Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA) Peer Work Project responded to the need for culturally appropriate assistance and support in the pre-planning process. It was supported through an NT Department of Business NDIS Innovation Grant

The severe disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal people living in remote and very remote areas—poverty, homelessness, chronic ill-health, lack of existing service infrastructure and language barriers mean that people may have difficulty articulating their needs within the context of NDIS. The complexity of the access process is also a significant barrier processes .A significant amount of time and building of relationship is required before people feel comfortable to share the kind of information needed for them to enter the scheme. We felt peer workers was the ideal way to respond to this need

The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction which has not invested in the development of a mental health peer workforce, despite more than ten years of implementation in other states and territories, and the clearly demonstrated value and key role peers can play in the recovery process. MHACA has tried to attract funding to support the development of a peer workforce for a long time and so were very excited to get this project off the ground.



MHACA Peer Work Project

Aim

- Support up to 50 people to prepare for entry to the scheme
- Train and employ 8-12 peer workers to assist in pre-planning
- Participants linked to PHAMS in Papunya and Alice Springs, and to Day2Day and PIR in Alice

The project was developed in partnership with two other organisations – Mission Australia and **Waltja** Aboriginal Corporation and we aimed to support up to 50 people in understanding the NDIS Access and pre-planning processes in Alice Springs and Papunya, using the reimagine.today workbook and tools.

Unfortunately both Mission and Waltja found themselves unable to participate in the project as envisaged due to staff turnover, and we have largely proceeded without them though do expect that they will join again before the project concludes.



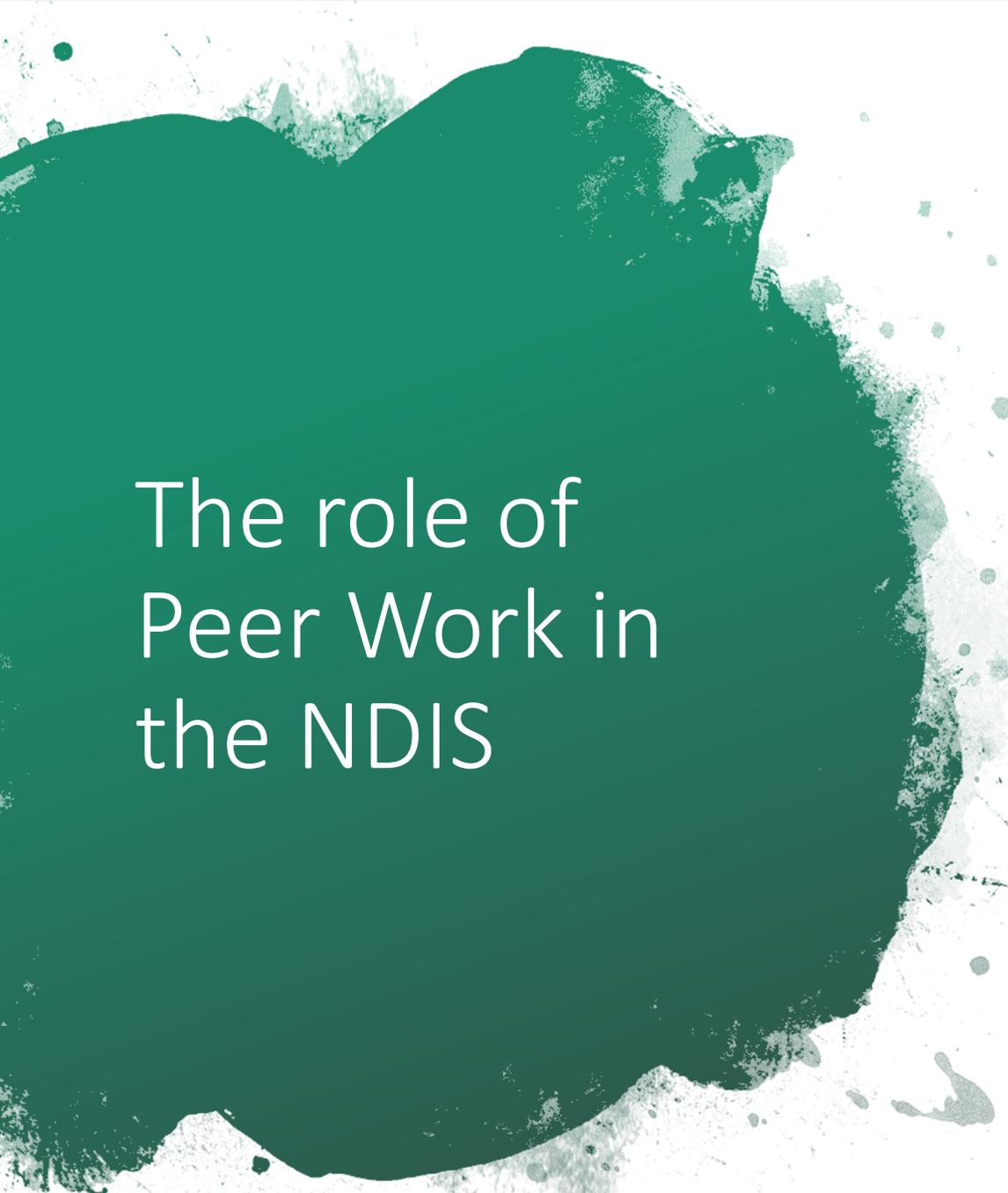
This is our team - two of whom are here today Amanda, the project coordinator, and Sarah, one of the peer workers, who will now take over the presentation

We recruited six peer workers and were later joined by another participant who at her own costs completed the Certificate 4 in Peer Work with MHCC a few years back.

The team completed 6 days of initial training – four days with the Centre for Recovery Oriented Practice – exploring Foundations of Recovery and Use of Lived Experience. Then two days using the materials developed through the Transition Support project about NDIS access and a session familiarising them with the Reimagine materials. In addition four of the peer workers completed their Mental Health First Aid Training

Since that time there have been additional opportunities for training in the functional Assessment tools, interviewing and communication skills and the Keys to Success training offered by VALID.





The role of Peer Work in the NDIS

- Peer Work is a powerful tool for engagement
- Peer Work is a pathway to employment
- Peer workers are versatile
- Every team needs a peer worker or preferably six

Peer work is a powerful tool for engagement

Supporting people with a lived experience to hone their knowledge and understanding of recovery processes and using that to assist others is really important work and it needs to be supported

Peer workers have broadened what we can offer in our program and brought a sense of warmth and inclusiveness to the services

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