

MEDIA RELEASE

Improving mental health recovery

17 August 2017

Eight rural and regional students are among the first in Victoria to graduate from the nationally recognised qualification, Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work (CHC43515)

Mental health peer support offers consumers and carers an increased sense of hope and control over their lives, along with a greater sense of belonging.

The innovative course, provided by VICSERV and Wodonga Institute of TAFE, was funded in part through scholarships provided by Murray PHN, which also provided travel and accommodation expenses for students from more rural parts of the region.

Angus Clelland, CEO of VICSERV said: “As the peak body for community managed mental health services in Victoria, VICSERV recognises that peer workers play an invaluable role in supporting mental health recovery.”

The main prerequisite for the course is that students have a lived experienced of mental ill health and recovery.

For practical experience, students were placed in local organisations including Mind-Australia, Anglicare, Golden City Support Services, Care Connect, AfterCare and Life Without Barriers.

Tracy Smith, one of the students who completed her placement at Anglicare, explained how she almost gave up on the course twice, due to lack of self-belief, but her Anglicare mentor and grandkids wouldn't let her. “I didn't get past school at the age of 14 but this course has given me confidence in myself, and in my ability to be able to help others get through tough times. To believe that they're worthwhile”.

Anglicare's Community Services Manager Phil Eddy, says they were very pleased to have supported five of the graduates. “The difference peer workers make to clients is tremendous, their lived experiences may be different but they share similarities, such as navigating through the medical system” he said.

Industry research has found that peer support workers in mental health services can help deliver services with a recovery focus and also reduce hospitalisation rates.

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones said the scholarships were just one part of the system change that the PHN is implementing, based on recommendations from the National Mental Health Commission's 2014 report 'Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities'.

“By understanding the lived experience of consumers and carers, we can help provide levels of service that meet their individualised needs,” he said. “Everyone deserves to receive the right care, in the right place and at the right time”.



Contact details

For more details, Jackie Grant, Communications Specialist e: jgrant@murrayphn.org.au or t: 0408 366 312

This activity has been made possible through funding provided by the Australian Government under the PHN Program.