

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024-2025



NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH  
CONSUMER ALLIANCE



Lived-experience leaders shaping the future of mental health in Australia. Pictured (L-R): Vicky McKenna – IALEC; Katrina Armstrong – Mental Health Carers Australia; Priscilla Brice – Alliance at our inaugural National Symposium.

## This year marks a defining moment for the mental health consumer movement in Australia.

### From the CEO

The Alliance – Australia’s first national mental health consumer peak led entirely by people with lived experience – is now active, influential, and united. Together, we’ve built a credible national voice grounded in the lived expertise of consumers across every state and territory.

We strengthened governance, grew a skilled lived-experience team, and forged lasting partnerships across governments, peaks, and community networks.

We’ve launched Australia’s first Human Rights Survey, convened our inaugural National Symposium, and adopted our first Strategic Plan – ensuring that lived experience leadership drives every level of mental health reform.

In just one year, we’ve proven what’s possible when people with lived experience don’t just participate in the system – we lead it.

**Priscilla Brice**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Who we are

We are Australia's **national peak body for mental health consumers** — led by and for people with mental health challenges.

Through our federated network of state and territory consumer peaks, we bring together more than 8,000 members and 135 years of organised lived-experience advocacy to form a powerful collective voice.

We believe that the people who use mental health services must shape how those systems are designed, delivered, and governed.

**8,000+** members nationally

**7** state and territory peaks in our federated network

**135+** years combined lived expertise

**50+** years of consumer movement history



**Our purpose is simple: to make lived experience the engine of national reform.**

MEET OUR BOARD



Alliance Board Members at our strategic planning workshop (not pictured: Tash Smyth above)

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER ALLIANCE

# Our Year in Review



Simon Katterl (now CEO of MHLEPO) delivering policy development workshop to our consumer advisory and policy advisors at our national symposium.

- Formalised our federated structure and signed **Service Level Agreements** with all seven state and territory consumer peaks.
- Created paid **Consumer Advisory Groups (CAGs)** in every jurisdiction, ensuring consumers directly shape national priorities.
- Established multicultural and regional and remote **expert advisory groups**
- Submitted **15 policy papers** to national inquiries and reforms.
- Shared our message through national webinars and keynotes, reaching hundreds of consumers, advocates, and policymakers.
- Partnered with **50+ national organisations.**
- Developed our first **Strategic Plan** — a bold, consumer-led blueprint for reform.
- Successfully influenced the **Productivity Commission** to recommend mental health lived expertise be at the heart of the next National Agreement with genuine power-sharing and co-governance arrangements.

## Building the Alliance

2024–25 was the year the Alliance truly took shape.

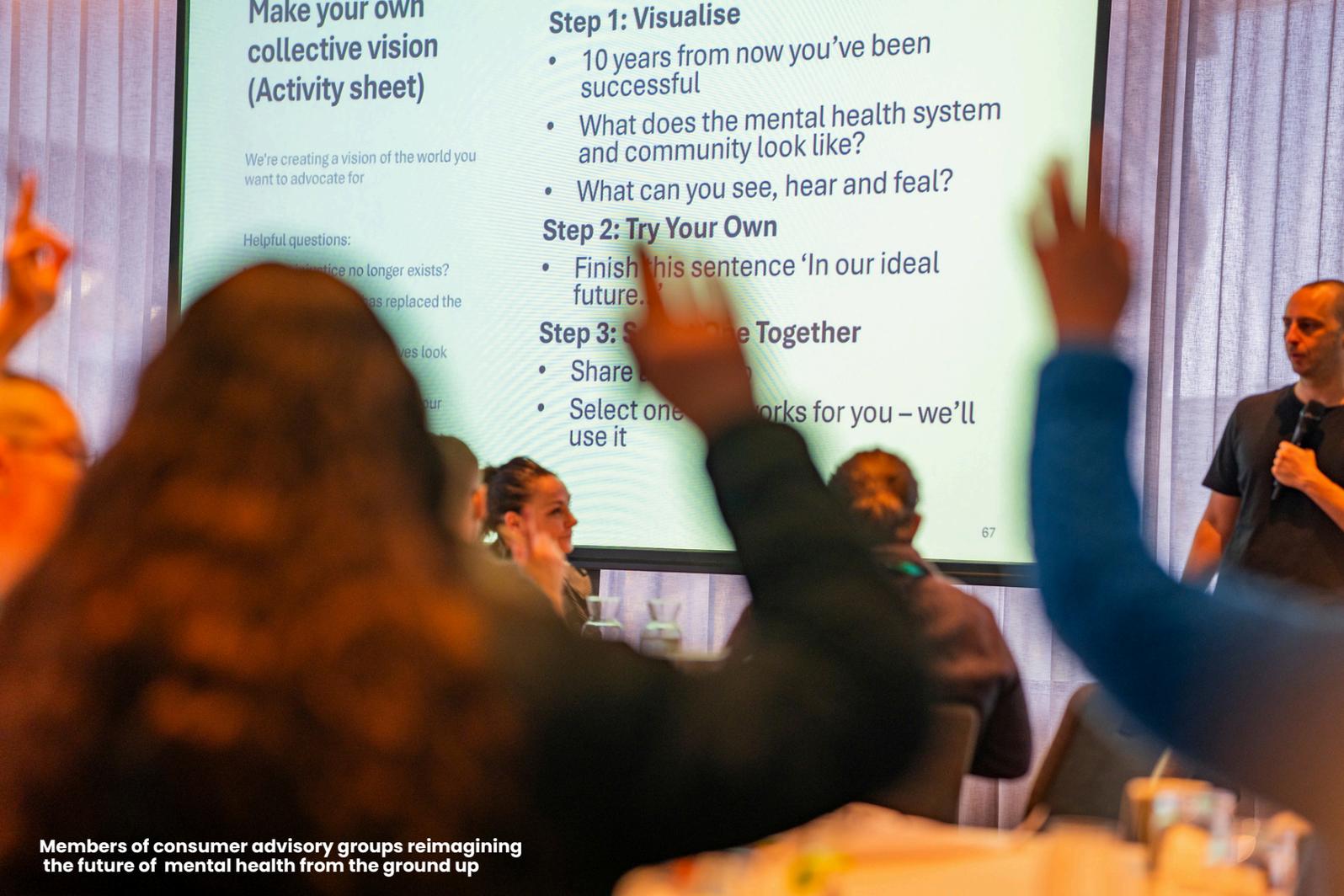
We built the organisational foundations that now anchor Australia’s national voice for mental health consumers.

Our governance model reflects who we are — led by lived experience, shaped by grassroots insight, and accountable to consumers nationwide.

We appointed our inaugural CEO, Chair and two First Nations Directors and expanded our team to four staff members.

*“The consumer movement is our compass – it keeps us focused on our North star, harnessing our collective strength.”*

GIANCARLO DE VERA - Alliance Board Member



Members of consumer advisory groups reimagining the future of mental health from the ground up

# Our way of working

As a federated movement, we unite the strength of local consumer peaks to form one national voice.

We work from the ground up – translating consumer lived experience into national reform through collaboration, participation, and shared power. Every decision we make is guided by the voices of people most affected by the mental health system.

In 2024–25, we launched our Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) network, embedding consumer participation across all jurisdictions.

CAGs identify local priorities, highlight systemic gaps, and feed into, shape and direct our national policy agenda.

Our Board is comprised of a leader nominated by each state and territory consumer peak (usually the CEO), alongside three independent Directors.

All Alliance Board members, staff, and our Independent Chair identify as people living with or through mental health challenges.



# Our Inaugural Strategic Plan 2025–2028

*“This plan is both a tribute to those who paved the way and a blueprint for the future.”*

In 2024–25, the Board also developed and endorsed the Alliance’s inaugural strategic plan — **Reimagining Mental Health** — a bold, consumer-led blueprint for transforming mental health in Australia.

Informed by our Human Rights Survey, consumer insights, and decades of lived-experience leadership, this plan unites our national vision for reform.



Alliance CEO Priscilla Brice (left) with Mary O'Hagan (right) global leader in mental health lived experience leadership.

## Mental health consumers determining our needs and wants

**Together we are reimagining and working towards a future where mental health consumers shape the systems, supports and rights that affect our lives.**

**Services by, for and with consumers** – Peer-led crisis alternatives and equitable psychosocial supports that uphold choice and dignity.

**Rights by, for and with consumers** – Stronger human rights protections, national legislative reform and an end to coercive practices.

**Opportunities for consumers to lead and innovate** – Clear pathways for consumer leadership, training, and consumer-led commissioning, monitoring and evaluation.

# Australia's first mental health human rights survey

In 2024, we launched our first **Human Rights Survey** – the first and only national survey designed by and for people with mental health challenges.

The survey captures lived evidence on how consumers' rights are respected, protected, and promoted across justice, health, housing, and community systems.

Conducted with ACACIA: The University of Melbourne's Lived Experience Research Unit, findings will inform our national policy platform and submissions and our ongoing advocacy for a national Human Rights Act.

**1 in 3**

*said they were bullied or harassed in the workplace*

**9 in 10**

*said they heard people with mental health challenges spoken about in discriminatory ways*

**1 in 13**

*said they experienced unstable housing or homelessness*



Alliance Board Member and VMIAC CEO Vrinda Egan (left) speaking to consumers colleagues at our National Symposium

# Making Rights Real

Making Rights Real is an innovative and consumer-led project delivered in partnership with Community Mental Health Australia. Instead of responding to broken systems and deficient frames, 11 consumer co-designers design what a good life would look like, on their terms, based on what matters most to them.

**“I am disabled, not incompetent. When providers believe that, that’s when the good work happens.”**

Participant



## Our co-design approach

We embedded co-design as the foundation of the project.

- 11 **co-designers** from diverse communities across Australia joined the project.
- Together, we developed a **Collective Agreement of Safety and Belonging**, ensuring trauma-informed, respectful participation.
- Ongoing feedback loops meant co-designers continually shaped and reviewed every output.



## *A good life means.....*



### **Policies that uphold our rights**

Legal capacity, financial security, and systems that support choice rather than restrict it.



### **Communities where we belong**

Peer-led, sensory-safe, culturally responsive spaces that foster inclusion and connection.



### **Services that respect us:**

Warm, welcoming, trauma-informed and peer-led care where consumers are recognised as experts in our own lives.

## **Our shared Good Life Vision**

One of the Making Rights Real project's biggest achievements this financial year was co-designing the Good Life Vision for people with psychosocial disability – a practical, human rights-grounded roadmap for a fair and fulfilling life.

## **What's Next (2025–26)**

With the Good Life Vision now developed, the Making Rights Real project will now move into an action-focused phase:

### **Refining the Good Life Blueprint**

Turning the vision into a clear national guide for rights-based support.

### **Naming the Barriers**

Co-designing a map of the systemic issues preventing people from achieving this good life.

### **Designing Solutions Together**

Developing consumer-led frameworks to drive national reform.

### **Creative Outputs**

Four lived experience writers and an illustrator are now bringing the Good Life Vision to life through articles and artwork.



NSW consumer advisory group with BEING Mental Health Consumers CEO Giancarlo de Vera (front row, last on the right).

# National Symposium

## Beyond Representation: From Experience to Expertise

In July 2025, we hosted our first consumer-led National Symposium in Melbourne, co-delivered with Mental Health Carers Australia.

Over 150 delegates – consumers, policymakers, and advocates – gathered to celebrate lived experience leadership and strengthen our shared movement.

Participants valued cross-jurisdictional collaboration and practical skills

**9 in 10**  
of participants reported greater confidence influencing policy

**“This was the first time I’ve felt my lived experience wasn’t just being heard – it was shaping national policy.”**

– participant

# Financial Overview

The Alliance finished its establishment year in a strong financial position, with funds directed toward sustainability, partnership development, and national capacity building. A full copy of our audited financial statements is on the ACNC's website.

Category	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$) (unaudited)
Revenue <i>See Note 1</i>	1,116,110	80,025
Employee Expenses <i>See Note 2</i>	(323,603)	-
Operating Expenses	(777,638)	(2,749)
<b>Operating Surplus</b>	14,869	77,276
Depreciation and Amortisation Expense <i>(Plant and Equipment)</i>	(3,035)	-
Total Non-Operating Revenue/(Expense)	(3,035)	-

## Note 1: Revenue from Ordinary Activities

Category	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$) (unaudited)
Grant Income	982,096	-
Other Grant Income	122,394	-
Interest	1,205	23
Other	10,415	80,002
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,116,110</b>	<b>80,025</b>

## Note 2: Employee Expenses

Category	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Salaries	269,308	-
Superannuation	31,019	-
Other Staff Costs	23,276	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>323,603</b>	<b>-</b>

# Financial Overview

## Balance Sheet as at June 2025

<b>Current Assets</b>	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$) (unaudited)
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,767,194	1,147,013
Receivables	59,003	6,089
Prepayments	1,269	-
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	1,827,466	1,153,102
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$) (unaudited)
Office Equipment	7,384	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	1,834,850	1,153,102
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$) (unaudited)
Payables	219,107	104,826
Contract liabilities	1,511,968	971,000
Leave Provisions	14,665	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	1,745,740	1,075,826
Net Assets	89,110	77,276
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$) (unaudited)
Balance at 1 July	77,276	-
Surplus for Year	11,834	77,276
<b>Total Accumulated Funds</b>	89,110	77,276



**OUT OF THE SHADOWS,  
INTO THE STREETS**  
**ARTWORK: LISSY ELLIOTT**  
Commissioned by the Alliance,  
photographed by Jamie Hornsby