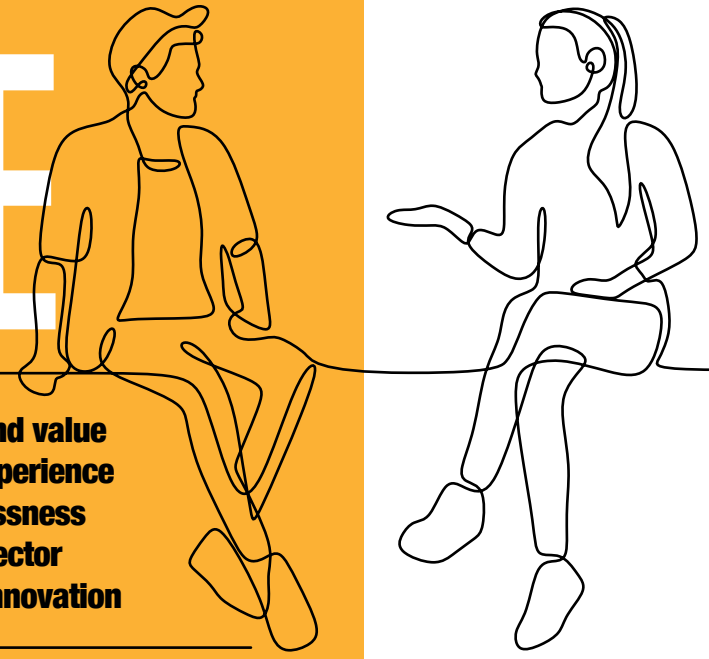# LIVED EXPERIENCE PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

The role and value of lived experience of homelessness in cross-sector systems innovation

The Constellation Project

The Constellation Project was an independent organisation that drove multi-sector collaboration with those directly impacted by homelessness to deliver smart solutions. Constellation merged with the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness in April 2024.

Our key focus was to increase the supply of safe, affordable homes for people in Australia on low to moderate incomes. We also developed accessible pathways to help people exit homelessness or avoid it in the first place.

FOREWORD

## Lorna Robinson, Lived Experience and Project Coordinator

I'm honoured to introduce this framework. It outlines Constellation's evolving approach to lived experience inclusion, developed in partnership with people with lived experience since inception.

I want to acknowledge and thank all who contributed their insights and experiences to shaping this important work. Your input has guided our approach and ensured its relevance and effectiveness.

We share this framework publicly with the intention of building better practice collectively and collaboratively. Lived experience inclusion is central to our approach, reflecting the belief that the voices and perspectives of those with lived experience are essential to developing meaningful and effective solutions to ending homelessness.

I encourage you to engage with this framework with a willingness to explore and an openness to challenging and adapting your practice.
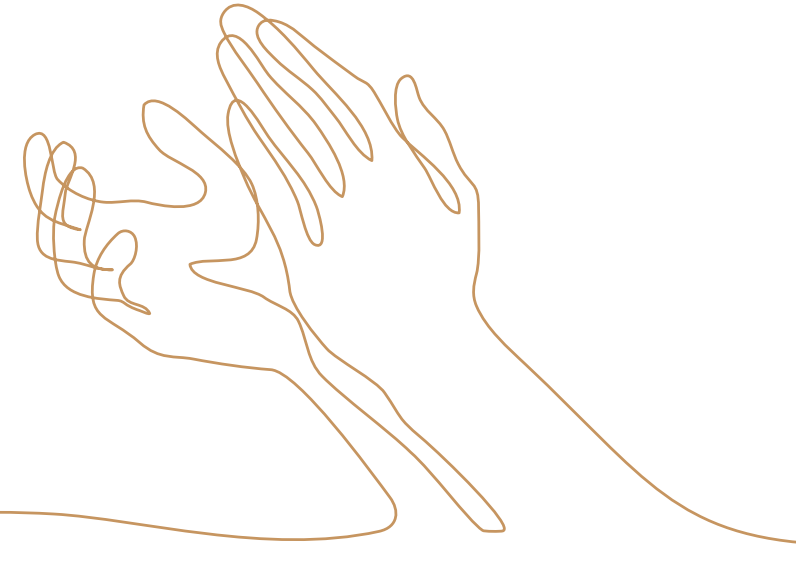
Formal thanks

Project partners

We'd like to recognise and thank our project partners in the development of this framework. In particular, their passion for and deep commitment to lived experience inclusion, practice and leadership: Morgan Cataldo, Principal Consultant at morgan&co, and Diane Brown, Senior Impact Fellow at RMIT Innovation Catalyst.

Funding partner

This work was made possible via trusts managed in Equity Trustees Sector Capacity Building Fund: Harold Moreland Oldham Perpetual Trust, J E & N Ganderton Endowment & Cederic Ivor Morrison Perpetual Trust.

Australian Alliance to End Homelessness

We'd like to thank the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) for their commitment to bringing this framework to life since we joined forces in April 2024. As a newly merged organisation, we remain committed to centring the knowledge, perspectives and needs of people with lived and living experiences of homelessness and continuing to evolve our practice in lived experience inclusion.

Past contributors

We thank all those who have contributed to The Constellation Project since our inception in 2018. In particular, we thank the people with lived and living experience of homelessness and previous team members and participants who have journeyed with us. Your patience, perseverance, critical reflections and feedback continue to shape and inform our evolving practice.

Peer reviewers

A huge thank you to those who generously invested their time to review this framework:

- Chris Hartley, UNSW City Futures
- Dana Shen, Director, DS Consulting
- Dr Ange Ballard, Advisor and Consultant
- Dr Betty O'Neill, TD School, University of Technology Sydney
- Juanita Ford, Mission Australia
- Sarah Nelson, Lived Expertise Advocate
- Shona Reid, previous First Nations Constellation Member
- Sigrid Rynehart, Independent Service Design Consultant

Acknowledgement of Country and First Nations Peoples

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, whose ancestral lands and waters we work and live on and are surrounded by throughout Australia. We honour the wisdom of, and pay respect to, Elders past and present.

We recognise the ongoing impacts of colonisation on First Nations Peoples, including the loss of traditional culture and homelands, forced removal of children, and continued denial of citizenship rights, all of which actively contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' unique experiences of homelessness and dispossession in Australia.

First Nations knowledge and wisdom of place, home, and systems forms a key focus of how Constellation understands and makes sense of these topics in an Australian context and seeks to embed this wisdom in all we do and how we do it.

Recognising the broader lived experience movement

We stand on the shoulders of broader human rights and liberation-focused movements, especially those who draw from their own personal experiences to create change. Without their continued advocacy and activism we would not be where we are today.

We recognise the impact of homelessness and housing stress on individuals, families, and communities across Australia. Although people who experience homelessness show great strength, resilience, and courage, homelessness is a *collective problem and responsibility*.

While many people with lived experience have deep insights and are eager to contribute to solutions, it is up to *all of us* to end homelessness.

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SECTION 1.
CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1.1 ABOUT THIS FRAMEWORK

Navigating the framework

This is a long and detailed document and different audiences will have different interests when reading it.

If you want to read about:

- The background of Constellation and the approaches we've taken so far, **continue reading Section 1**
- Our vision for lived experience inclusion at Constellation and the concepts that sit behind our practice, **see Section 2**
- The actions and approaches that will get us there, **see Section 3**
- Extra detail including information about remuneration for people with lived experience, **see Appendices.**

Purpose of the framework

This framework outlines our approach to lived experience inclusion, developed in partnership with people with lived experience over the past five years. It details the principles and practices that we draw from and use as part of our commitment to lived experience inclusion, the concepts that have informed our ways of working, and our lessons and learnings from the journey so far.

We hope that others might benefit from hearing about this journey, as we know that there is a strong appetite to learn more and do better when it comes to engaging and partnering with people with lived experience in advocacy, co-design and systems change work.

We have found that there is a gap in publicly-available information about *how* to do this and hope that through learning out loud that we can make a contribution to building better practice collectively and collaboratively.

What and why of lived experience

Lived experience refers to the knowledge and understanding of something gained through direct, first-hand involvement.

? **Although 'consumer participation' is a term commonly used to refer to similar concepts, we use the term 'lived experience' instead for a few reasons. It highlights the importance of personal, first-hand knowledge, captures experiences outside of a service context, and moves beyond mental health and health centric contexts where consumer participation is most commonly used and known.**

When we refer to lived experience at the Constellation Project (Constellation), we mean people who have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, or who have experienced being at risk of homelessness.

This may include people who have been exposed to domestic and family violence, financial stress, periods of unemployment, contact with the criminal legal system and other intersecting issues.

We use the term 'lived experience' throughout this Framework to refer to people with lived and living experience of housing insecurity and homelessness.

Defining homelessness

There is no single definition of homelessness.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness as the lack of one or more elements that represent 'home.'

The ABS statistical definition of homelessness is '... when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.'[1]

Lived experience often brings distinct insights, lateral thinking[2], skills, and creative approaches that are commonly missing in conventional policy-making and service design.

Sharing personal insights is critical for designing solutions that better meet the complexity that people are experiencing in their everyday lives. People with lived experience are therefore critical partners in efforts to end homelessness, as they bring nuanced reflections on the challenges they have faced and the impact of system responses and nonresponses.

They can help to identify what change is needed and potential unintended consequences of approaches and initiatives.

---

1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023). *Homelessness and homelessness services.* aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/homelessness-and-homelessness-services

2 Cambridge Dictionary defines lateral thinking as *"the process of considering a problem in a different and original way, rather than following traditional or expected ideas."* dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lateral-thinking

Partnering with people with lived experience is more than amplifying their voices –

> **it is a political act that re-frames the balance of power and is part of a movement towards greater equity, rights and justice.**[3]

It is critical that those who have experienced homelessness are part of imagining, contributing to and enacting solutions. Through genuine partnerships and shared visions for change, we can better gauge the effectiveness of existing policies and how we should inform future policies, service system responses, and broader social and systems change.

How the framework was developed

This framework was developed by people in identified lived experience positions at Constellation in collaboration with RMIT's Innovation Catalyst team. Additionally, participants with lived experience and research and practice knowledge within Constellation's network were asked to review and provide feedback.

This framework was informed in many ways by Constellation's learning partnership with RMIT University. The Lived Experience Inclusion and Impact Project has been instrumental in further refining our approach.[4]

Who the framework is for

We have developed this framework with the following audiences in mind:

Service system practitioners and frontline workers

Corporate and philanthropic partners invested in ending homelessness

For-purpose leaders in not-for-profit and social impact spaces

People interested in examples of lived experience inclusion from the field.

3 Coopes, A. (2017). *Lived experience and peer workers: transforming mental health services.* croakey.org/lived-experience-and-peer-workers-transforming-mental-health-services/
4 Brown, D., Hexter, M., and McNolty, C. (2023). *The value and impact of lived experience contributions to ending homelessness: Case studies from the Constellation Project.* RMIT Innovation Catalyst, RMIT University, Melbourne. https://tinyurl.com/222v83at

In 2018, Australian Red Cross, the Centre for Social Impact, Mission Australia and PwC Australia joined forces around the idea that if they all worked together and pooled their diverse skills, experience and reach around housing affordability and homelessness, they would have the right recipe for creating smart solutions that could achieve lasting change.
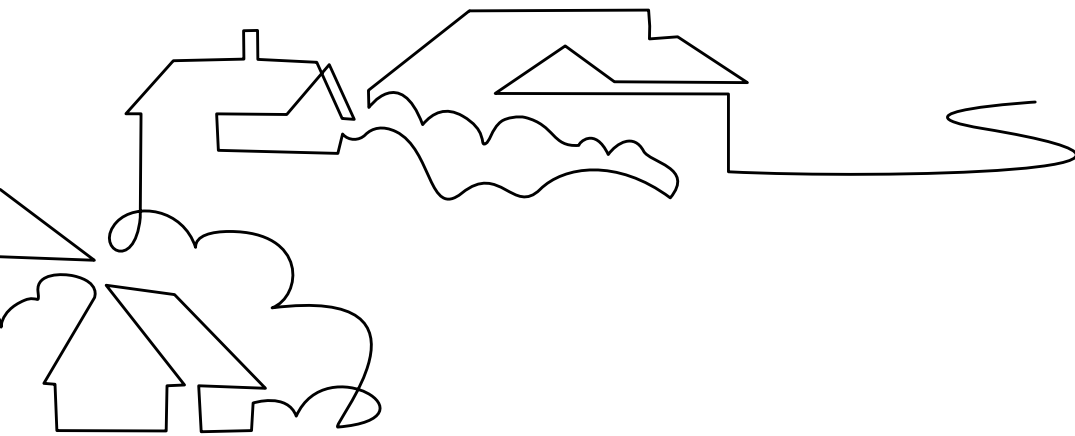
This way of working led to a social lab[5] process that began in 2018 bringing together over 100 people from across not-for-profit, business and government sectors together with people who had lived experience of homelessness, to explore the homelessness and housing landscape and identify practical solutions to progress.

We share a vision of ending homelessness in a generation.

To successfully end homelessness, we must shift the conditions that produce it to begin with. Each focused initiative is a step towards this, as we leverage collaboration across sectors to produce feasible plans, models and strategies for implementation.

Lived experience insights are core to our approach. Constellation aims to make sure that the diverse insights of people with lived experience are present at all levels of our organisation, from the board, through the executive team, into the project teams and across all our events and workshops.

Now established as an independent entity, Constellation remains committed to the vision of driving multi-sector collaboration with those directly impacted by homelessness to deliver smart solutions.

5   Social labs are platforms for addressing complex social challenges that have three core characteristics: they are social, they are experimental, and they are systemic. Hassan, Z. (2014). *The Social Labs Revolution: A New Approach to Solving our Most Complex Challenges.* Stanford Social Innovation Review. ssir.org/books/excerpts/entry/the_social_labs_revolution_a_new_approach_to_solving_our_most_complex_chall

DIAGRAM A.

Timeline of lived experience practice at Constellation

2018

Involvement of people with lived experience in founding Round Table

Commitment to lived experience inclusion as core principle

2019

Participation by people with lived experience in social lab

Establishment of Lived Experience Advisory Team

2020

Funding from Equity Trustees to embed lived experience inclusion as a defined practice

Identified role for person with lived experience on executive team

Refined lived experience paid participation approach

Lived Experience Advisory Team shifted from a separate advisory function to being fully embedded within social lab teams

2021

Participation by people with lived experience in social lab teams

Research by Centre for Social Impact on experience of young people leaving the justice system[6]

Peer research focused on the transition from the child protection and youth justice systems in South Australia

Further grant funding from Equity Trustees to deepen practice

Participatory practice training for board and executive team

2022

Identified role for person with lived experience appointed to new board

Commissioning of lived experience Impact and Inclusion research project with RMIT University

Launch of *Lived Experience Voices: insights into young people's transition from the child protection and youth justice systems in South Australia and the intersections with homelessness* report[7]

2023

Participation by people with lived experience in Systems Navigator Project Team

Public speaking and presentation opportunities at events for people with lived experience

Lived experience consultations for this Lived Experience Practice Framework

Full-day Lived Experience Practice Forum held in Melbourne, with lived experience inclusion in the design and delivery of the day

Publication of RMIT research on the impact of lived experience contributions to Constellation's work[8]

6   Hartley, C., Meltzer, A., Barnes, E. (2021). *Preventing homelessness after release from youth justice detention: Reflections on planning a participatory, lived experience and trauma-informed project.* Report prepared for the Constellation Project., Centre for Social Impact, Sydney.

7   The Constellation Project (2021). *Lived Experience Voices: insights into young people's transition from the child protection and youth justice system in South Australia and the intersections with homelessness.* theconstellationproject.com.au/projects/lived-experiences-report/

8   Brown, D., Hexter, M., and McNolty, C. (2023). *The value and impact of lived experience contributions to ending homelessness: Case studies from the Constellation Project.* RMIT Innovation Catalyst, RMIT University, Melbourne. https://tinyurl.com/222v83at

1.3 BROADER CONTEXT

Constellation is not alone in its efforts to develop and embed lived experience practice across its work.

There is a groundswell of activity across Australia and internationally to increase the involvement of people with lived experience in work being done to address homelessness.

This collective effort recognises and responds to the fact that people with lived experience make powerful and distinctive contributions to service improvement, innovation, and systems change through involvement in research, policy development, service design and delivery in a range of roles including advocacy, consultancy, and peer work.

The concept of drawing from lived experience to inform and create change is not new. Systematically marginalised communities have a long history of using their direct experiences of oppression to advocate for social and political change and have given rise to influential leaders of new movements.

First Nations fights for sovereignty across the colonised world, the women's liberation movement, the civil rights movement, the LGBTIQA+ rights movement and the disability activism that popularised the term *'nothing about us without us is for us'* are all based on lived experience.

It is, however, a relatively recent phenomenon to have disciplined efforts to bring lived experience capabilities into service and policy improvement and delivery, particularly in the housing and homelessness sector.

There is now widespread recognition across for-purpose sectors that the experiences, knowledge, and skills of those accessing services are critical to the success of our social systems.

In public services and social policy, design-led methodologies are increasingly used to gather insight and ideas from those who are, or will be, using services, and to test new propositions.

Why is the homelessness sector behind other sectors when it comes to participation?

The integration of participatory approaches in homelessness services is underdeveloped compared to other service contexts. Some of the factors influencing this include:[9]

- Those impacted by homelessness having **fewer opportunities** than the general population to participate in consultation and design processes, especially in relation to decisions that affect them. This lack of meaningful participation in homelessness service delivery exacerbates the disconnection between service user experiences and agency priorities.

- **A scarcity of research and literature** available that provides insights into meaningful participation approaches in the context of homelessness service delivery, particularly regarding efficiency, effectiveness, and potential to influence service delivery and policy development.

- **Provider attitudes** about people with lived experience, including a failure to adequately recognise their skills, along with negative attitudes that encompass stigma, discrimination, a lack of respect, and skepticism about their capacity to participate effectively. Negative attitudes can also develop due to the changing nature of relationship dynamics, as power dynamics shift and change as a result of participation.

- **A deficit in organisational readiness and resources** when it comes to working and partnering with people with lived experience of homelessness.

Increasing emphasis on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social and governance (ESG) activities has also brought design thinking and consumer analytics to the challenge of addressing complex social problems.

There is an increasing professionalisation of lived experience participation into roles that operate across the social sector, influencing thinking and change at many different levels. Peer workers in service provision, lived experience advocacy roles and peer researchers in academic settings are now frequently found across sectors and issue areas.

Despite this activity, practices that support and enable lived experience contributions in housing and homelessness are emergent. Many are still learning how to do this work well, and developing knowledge about craft and conditions through projects and initiatives such as Constellation.
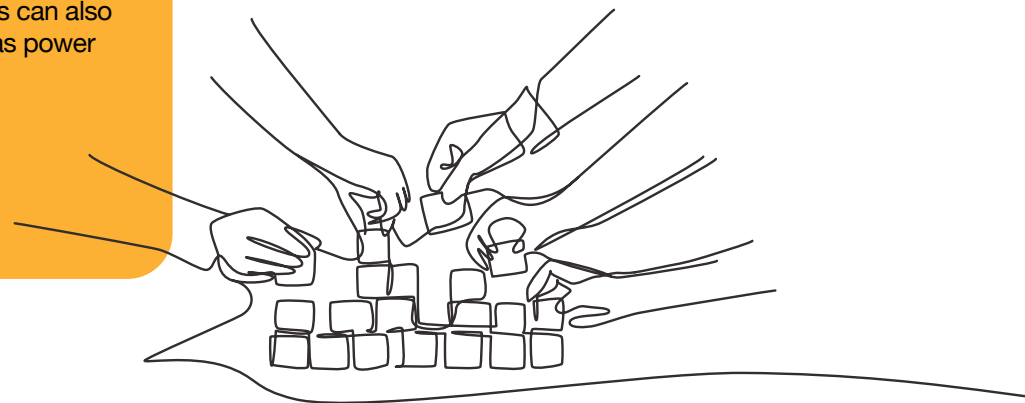
9 Tseris, E. (2020). *The Expansion of the Peer Adviser Workforce: Opportunities and Challenges for Social Work*. Australian Social Work, 73:2, 162-174. doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2019.1675734
Phillips, D., & Kuyini, A. B. (2018). *Consumer participation at Specialist Homelessness Services: Do the homeless have a say in the services they receive?* International Social Work, 61(6), 1095-1115. doi.org/10.1177/0020872817695644

SECTION 2.
CONSTELLATION'S LIVED EXPERIENCE MODEL: VISION AND PRINCIPLES

2.1 CONSTELLATION'S COMMITMENT TO LIVED EXPERIENCE INCLUSION

At Constellation, we believe that the issue of homelessness cannot be sufficiently understood or addressed without the contributions of people with lived experience.

The following PRINCIPLES underpin our ways of working:

Recognising and valuing lived experience

We recognise and value the learnings of those with lived experience, and that their voices and perspectives must be integrated into decision-making and solutions.

Creating the right conditions

We work to create the right conditions where insights from people with lived experience are sought both formally and informally, and believe embedding these insights leads to more effective research and more informed responses to ending homelessness.

Appreciating diversity in and of 'community'

We recognise the diversity that exists within communities, including their unique capabilities, needs, and perspectives. We seek to involve participants whose lived experience aligns with specific focus areas of each project or activity.

Scaffolding supports

We are committed to connecting people to appropriate, informed, and customised supports that enable meaningful engagement and partnerships.

Valuing time and skills

We value the unique contributions of people with lived experience in our work, and remunerate them accordingly.

Committing to continuous feedback and learning

We are committed to facilitating an organisational culture which is open to continuous feedback about our approaches and that seeks to improve based on what we hear and are challenged by.

2.2 THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Alongside our efforts to embed lived experience, Constellation has also had a core commitment to partnering with First Nations people since inception. The knowledge and insights they have generously shared with us have highlighted additional layers of experience that relates to First Nations history and culture in all its diversity.

For example, alternative interpretations of concepts like 'home' and 'safety' can exist as a result of deep and continued connections to the land, elders and communities. Imposing dominant, mainstream models, such as housing solutions that prioritise physical buildings over other protective factors, can lead to adverse and inappropriate outcomes and neglect other critical considerations such as proximity to kin and traditional lands.

This highlights the critical importance of First Nations leadership in the design of solutions that seek to improve outcomes for First Nations people, which must be considered as a distinct lens alongside lived experience inclusion and practice.

> **...my experience has been that First Nations children, young people and families continue to face systemic barriers to having their voices heard, and being truly engaged in decision-making.**
>
> I have observed systems that are built around viewing Aboriginality as a risk factor and do not recognise the inherent value and strengths of Aboriginal culture; good intentions undermined by inflexible systems that do not work for Aboriginal children and families; and, at times, the continued impacts of racial stereotypes, biases and prejudices.
>
> I strongly believe that the current state of play is a direct result of law and policy makers not listening to and engaging with the human experiences and expert advice of First Nations people. I will continue to advocate that improving the lives of First Nations children and families must be led by the voices and knowledge of First Nations people.[10]
>
> **Shona Reid, Guardian for Children and Young People**
> **South Australia**

10 Reid, S. (2023). *Message from the Guardian: Outcome of the Voice Referendum.* Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People. gcyp.sa.gov.au/2023/10/20/message-from-the-guardian-outcome-of-the-voice-referendum

2.3 CONSTELLATION'S LIVED EXPERIENCE PRACTICE THEORY OF CHANGE

Through integrating practice approaches informed and driven by lived experience, we ensure that contextually relevant perspectives are driving Constellation's contributions to ending homelessness.

BY...
(actions/activities)

- Considering the language we use and recognising the impact of language.
- Investing in appropriate supports for people with lived experience, tailored to the person and activity.
- Building relationships based on trust and respect with people with lived experience.
- Engaging people with lived experience in discussions and co-creating safer spaces for genuine involvement.

IF WE...
(principles/approaches)

SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT

Create safer conditions that are conducive for people with lived experience to contribute.

Create the right conditions to harness diverse perspectives in the ideation and development of solutions.

- Convening project teams, events, workshops and other forums that have a diverse range of lived experience perspectives alongside other sectors.
- Co-designing our events, workshops and forums with people with lived experience.

- Taking considered risks.
- Creating an environment of trust and learning.
- Investing in research and learning that examines what we've done.

ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Don't let fear be a barrier to innovation and have the courage to try new ways of doing things, understanding we might achieve better outcomes.

Embed lived experience at all levels of our work and create structural opportunities for people with lived experience to lead.

- Having identified positions on the board and executive team.
- Involving people with lived experience in the teams that design solutions, events and forums.

- Refusing to shy away from challenging situations and conversations.
- Providing training and coaching to help build literacy around power, allyship, and trauma aware practice.
- Identifying and seeking to address approaches that create or reflect power imbalances when designing events, workshops and forums, and convening project teams.

CULTURE

Pay attention to and challenge power imbalances.

- Fairly remunerating people with lived experience for their work.
- Ensuring equal weight is given to the knowledge of people with lived experience when it comes to making decisions about Constellation's work.

WORKFORCE

Recognise and value the learnings of people with lived experience of homelessness.

Invest in the skills and capabilities of people with lived experience to contribute to our shared work.

- Providing mentoring, coaching and training for people in identified positions and those participating in project teams.
- Creating supported opportunities for people with lived experience to contribute to, and lead, a range of activities.

THIS WILL RESULT IN…
(short-term outcomes)

- Deeper and more meaningful insights into issues and potential solutions through seeking out and engaging more diverse perspectives that we might not hear from otherwise.
- Greater knowledge generation across the organisation.

- A more relational and respectful organisational culture that enables more productive contributions and effective solutions to be developed.
- More effective strategic decisions, which are guided by the experiences and perspectives of the reality of homelessness and service systems.

- Changed mindsets and assumptions of those *without* lived experience, promoting more open, authentic and innovative ways of thinking and working.
- More equal valuing of what's considered 'expertise', beyond formal qualifications and more traditional forms of expertise.

- Increased capabilities and self-belief for people with lived experience contributing to solutions to homelessness.
- Increased and diverse opportunities and pathways for people with lived experience to contribute to social and systems change both within and beyond Constellation.

AND EVENTUALLY LEAD TO…
(long-term outcomes)

More effective solutions to homelessness

Solutions that are refined, contextual and meet the complexity of what people are experiencing.

Effective take up of solutions across sectors and systems.

Replicable systems change

An operating model for social innovation that foregrounds and draws from lived experience of homelessness and could be applied to future collaborative projects across other sectors.

Constellation's leaders' capabilities developed, which they then take to lead and create change within their communities and the broader social sector.

Social change

Reduction in stigma faced by people with lived experience of homelessness more broadly across social sectors.

Inclusive workforce development

Greater understanding of, and demand for, lived experience and expertise in broader social and for-purpose sectors.

An expanded pool of talent in the lived experience workforce for the wider social and for-purpose sector to draw on.

2.4 GROUNDING CONCEPTS

In developing Constellation's approach to systems innovation and outlining our practice of partnering with people with lived experience as part of this approach, we have been informed by a range of concepts, models and ideas drawn from a range of disciplines and movements. Here, we have stepped out a high-level summary of the key concepts that guide Constellation's lived experience practice approaches.

	DESCRIPTION	WHAT DOES THIS WAY OF THINKING BRING TO CONSTELLATION'S APPROACH?
Anti-oppressive practice	Anti-oppressive practice focuses on how larger systems create and protect unearned privilege and power for some groups of people while creating, maintaining, and upholding difficult and inequitable conditions for others.[11] It works to centre the experiences of marginalised groups to build structures and systems that work for everyone.[12] It also aims to help those who engage in it to improve their skills in what's called **'critical consciousness'**. Critical consciousness is the combination of **critical action and reflection**.[13] This helps us to step back and think about our practices or policies and ask critical questions about how they impact the people around us, and then take action. Through this practice approach, we see changes occur not just in systems, but within people as well.	We know that homelessness is not an experience that everyone has, or has had. We also know there are particular people and groups of people who are more vulnerable to homelessness due to service and systems gaps, structural and systemic neglect, and historic and continuing forms of discrimination. An anti-oppressive practice lens helps us to understand who are the most vulnerable to experiencing homelessness, the structures and barriers in place that keep them structurally vulnerable, and partner with them to identify those barriers and imagine and design better pathways and solutions.
Participatory design	Participatory design involves actively involving individuals or communities who use or are affected by social services and broader social issues in design and decision-making processes. It recognises that those who are most impacted hold unique insights and experiences that can inform and improve the design of policy and services and lead to broader social and systems change. This approach acknowledges the importance of understanding the needs, preferences, and circumstances of individuals and communities and involves them as **active participants**, rather than **passive recipients**. These three dimensions or questions are useful prompts in defining whether an approach or process is truly participatory: • Who initiates the work, and how much do they initiate? • Who participates, and how fully do they participate? • Who leads the process, regardless of participation, and how much do they lead?[14]	We believe that the best way to design approaches that will help to end homelessness is to work in partnership with those who are at risk of, or who have experienced homelessness. This means that we seek to integrate and embed lived experience insights in all we do, at every level of the organisation, and ensure that people with lived experience are represented as active contributors in every project, process or event that we develop. At the heart of Constellation's model is people with lived experience driving what we do, including what we identify as the work that needs to be done, and how we approach that work, together.

11 Baines, D. (2017). *Doing Anti-Oppressive Practice: Social Justice Social Work.* 3rd Edition. Fernwood Publishing.
12 Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (n.d). *What is Anti-Oppressive Practice?* campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/anti-oppressive-practice/what-is-anti-oppressive-practice/
13 Aqil et al. (2021). *Engaging in Anti-Oppressive Public Health Teaching: Challenges and Recommendations.* journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23733799211045407
14 Udoewa, V. (2022). *An introduction to radical participatory design: decolonising participatory design processes.* Design Science, 8, E31.
cambridge.org/core/journals/design-science/article/an-introduction-to-radical-participatory-design-decolonising-participatory-design-processes/63F70ECC408844D3CD6C1A5AC7D35F4D

DESCRIPTION	WHAT DOES THIS WAY OF THINKING BRING TO CONSTELLATION'S APPROACH?

Human rights lens

"The lived experience movement is a human rights movement." [15]

"Human rights recognise the inherent value of each person, regardless of background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or what we believe. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect, which are shared across cultures, religions and philosophies. They are about being treated fairly, treating others fairly and having the ability to make genuine choices in our daily lives." [16]

Empowerment and participation of people with lived experience is considered essential to progressing human rights. A human rights-based approach to service delivery and policy development includes considering both **what** we will do based on human rights principles and any associated obligations we may have, as well as **how** we will work in ways that protect these rights.

We know that homelessness is not just a social issue, it is a human rights issue. Australia is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that *"everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living including adequate food, water and housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions".* [17]

The Australian Human Rights Commission identifies 'participation' as a common principle of human rights based approaches, noting that *"everyone has the right to participate in decisions which affect their human rights."* [18] Understanding this helps all of us who work with Constellation to see the problem through this lens, and to incorporate it across our messaging.

It means that we hold a strong, foundational stance that people being able to access safe, supported and affordable housing is something that is non-negotiable, and that those who understand this the most are those who are experiencing homelessness first-hand.

It also means that as an organisation we seek to uphold people's human rights, which includes recognising lived experience and valuing it as we would other knowledge inputs (i.e. ensuring people with lived experience are fairly remunerated).

Systems thinking

A system is a set or pattern of relationships interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time.[19]

Systems thinking is a way of approaching a problem by looking at it from multiple perspectives.

It helps us investigate and understand the conditions, factors, and experiences of an issue and those wrestling with it, as well as expose root causes and the interrelationships that hold problems in place.[20]

Homelessness is a complex issue, and so it is important for us to be able to zoom out and see more of the picture (or system) before we decide on the best places to intervene, or consider our role in any interventions.

Seeing homelessness through a systems lens enables a deeper understanding of the root causes and complexities that are driving it, and enables targeted strategies and solutions to addressing it.

Understanding these factors gives us additional context when we are designing approaches and responses, helps us think carefully about who we partner and collaborate with, and supports us to take a step back and consider the influence of intersecting issues.

15 Queensland Mental Health Commission (2017). *Promoting Lived Experience Perspective: Discussion paper prepared for the Queensland Mental Health Commission.* qmhc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Promoting-Lived-Experience-Perspective_Discussion-paper.pdf

16 Australian Human Rights Commission. *What are human rights?* humanrights.gov.au/about/what-are-human-rights

17 Australian Government Attorney-General's Department (n.d). *Right to an adequate standard of living, including food, water and housing: Public sector guidance sheet.* ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/human-rights-scrutiny/public-sector-guidance-sheets/right-adequate-standard-living-including-food-water-and-housing

18 Australian Human Rights Commission (n.d). *Human rights based approaches.* humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/human-rights-based-approaches

19 Meadows, D. (2008). *Thinking in Systems: A Primer.* Chelsea Green Publishing Co.

20 Kania, K., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). *The Water of Systems Change.* fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/

DESCRIPTION		WHAT DOES THIS WAY OF THINKING BRING TO CONSTELLATION'S APPROACH?
Trauma aware and responsive practice	Although not everyone who experiences homelessness will become traumatised, many do. It is therefore critical that we become conscious of the impacts of homelessness, navigating service systems, and systemic trauma[21] and learn how to design policy, services and approaches with trauma aware and responsive approaches in mind. At Constellation, we recognise the limitations of a primary focus on trauma, including the concept of trauma itself remaining ill-defined.[22] However, we still feel that it is critical and worthwhile to understand and apply this lens to our approaches in ways that align with evolving theory and practice.	This approach means that those who work with Constellation have an understanding of the concept and impacts of individual and systemic trauma and how to work alongside people in ways that aim to build safety (psychological and otherwise), foster trust, and cultivate relationships over time. In particular, when working with lived experience participants as part of our co-design projects, identifying the right external partners, consultants and stakeholders we choose to work with, and taking the time to actively reflect and make changes to our approaches when we get it wrong or miss the mark.
Valuing lived experience as a way of knowing	Lived experience as a way of knowing, being, and doing encompasses the knowledge, perspectives, and understanding that individuals gain through their direct, personal encounters with various aspects of life. Lived experience is holistic and subjective, incorporating personal insights, emotions, and worldviews. It complements other forms of knowledge, such as theoretical knowledge, by offering a unique and valuable perspective that is rooted in personal encounters with real-life situations. Recognising and valuing lived experience can contribute to more inclusive and effective approaches to addressing social challenges and issues, such as homelessness.	Historically, when decision-makers come together to address a complex social issue like homelessness, first-hand knowledge of the issue has not been seen as valuable or taken into consideration. As a result, those with intimate lived experience of an issue get left out, and the solutions that are developed are imagined *without* those who are the most affected by it. Consequently, critical knowledge and information are missed, often resulting in significant harm and unintended consequences within the services and programs that are built and put in place. Understanding this from the very beginning has meant that Constellation has worked consciously not to replicate this problem. Instead, we partner with people with lived experience to imagine what Constellation might be, to consider our role in wider social systems, and to take advice on how we might approach our work differently. Fast forward to Constellation now, this means that we don't identify problems, make key decisions, or partner with others without the role of lived experience informing what we do and how we do it. We also make sure to explicitly value lived experience as a critical form of knowledge by creating dedicated positions and opportunities for people with lived experience, alongside those with other forms of expertise.

21 Goldsmith R.E., Martin C.G., & Smith C.P. (2014). *Systemic Trauma*. 15(2):117-32. doi.org/10.1080/15299732.2014.871666

22 The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss). Insight 70 (2023). *Trauma-informed approaches: a critical overview of what they offer to social work and social care.* iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/trauma-informed-approaches-critical-overview-what-they-offer-social-work-and-social-care

SECTION 3.
CONSTELLATION'S LIVED EXPERIENCE MODEL IN PRACTICE

3.1 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: CONNECTING CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

This section steps out our lived experience inclusion model in practice by drawing together our grounding concepts, principles, and the practice areas we focus on in our day-to-day operations. Together, these concepts, principles and practices enable us to deliver on our commitment to partnering with people with lived experience of homelessness.

We then describe in detail our key practices, policies and strategies, before sharing some of the critical learnings from the past five years about how to create the right conditions for this work.

Constellation's lived experience model

This diagram illustrates the core components of our lived experience model.[23]

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE

HUMAN RIGHTS LENS

VALUING LIVED EXPERIENCE

TRAUMA AWARE AND RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

SYSTEMS THINKING

GROUNDING CONCEPTS

RECOGNISING AND VALUING LIVED EXPERIENCE

PRACTICE AREAS

COMMITTING TO CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK AND LEARNING

CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

APPRECIATING DIVERSITY IN AND OF COMMUNITY

VALUING TIME AND SKILLS

SCAFFOLDING SUPPORTS

CARE AND SUPPORT

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

COMMITMENT TO LIVED EXPERIENCE

VALUE, PAY AND PROGRESSION

RELATIONSHIPS AND CULTURE

23 See practice principles and grounding concepts in detail in Section 2

3.2 KEY PRACTICE AREAS AND STRATEGIES FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE INCLUSION

PRACTICE AREAS	PRACTICES, POLICIES AND STRUCTURES	IN PRACTICE THIS LOOKS LIKE
CARE AND SUPPORT	**Breakout spaces**	▪ When conducting a workshop or event in-person, setting aside a breakout room for people to use if they need space. This room might also have a supportive team member present.
	Briefing and debriefing	▪ Running individual briefing and debriefing sessions with lived experience participants for any activity (event, workshop etc.) These include conversations to determine individualised support needs that might better enable participation, including assistance with transport, access to communication tools, and adjusting work to accommodate needs. ▪ Giving people as much information as possible about what to expect from any event or engagement, the benefits and risks of participation, and specifying their role, so that informed decisions about participation can be made. That way people with lived experience can decide whether and how to share their experiences. ▪ If participation is for an event, offering a walk-through of the space beforehand. ▪ Follow-up calls to check in on wellbeing and seeking feedback about engagement opportunities to contribute to practice improvement.
	Coaching and supervision	▪ Providing tailored support for those in identified lived experience roles, together with dedicated time and space for debriefing, reflection and discussion.

3.2 KEY PRACTICE AREAS AND STRATEGIES FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE INCLUSION

PRACTICE AREAS	PRACTICES, POLICIES AND STRUCTURES	IN PRACTICE THIS LOOKS LIKE
CARE AND SUPPORT	**Learning and development**	■ Lived experience inclusion and practice training for all Constellation staff, including the board and executive team. ■ Having conversations about career pathways and progression with staff in identified positions and as paid participants, investing in opportunities for them to develop their skills.
	Peer-to-peer support	■ Constellation's Lived Experience and Project Coordinator overseeing the engagement and inclusion of other participants with lived experience. By drawing from their own experiences, the Coordinator works to foster a sense of connection and shared understanding. ■ Investing in and making space for opportunities for peer-to-peer support for identified roles, both within and beyond Constellation.
	Providing support information	■ Providing a list of internal and external supports so that people know who they can reach out to if anything is upsetting or potentially retraumatising. This is usually sent prior to and post engagements.
	Recognising lived experience	■ At events, forums and workshops, offering recognition of the lived experience that exists in every room and space we're in, beyond dedicated lived experience roles.[24]

24 This is done separately to an Acknowledgment of Country to ensure the intention and practice remains distinct and culturally sensitive

PRACTICE AREAS	PRACTICES, POLICIES AND STRUCTURES	IN PRACTICE THIS LOOKS LIKE
LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING	**Identified positions**	■ **Identified position on the board** There is currently a dedicated board position reserved for a person with lived experience of homelessness. Constellation is going through a process of reviewing this arrangement to explore whether this is the most effective and equitable approach. ■ **Identified position on the executive team** Constellation's Lived Experience and Project Coordinator is on the executive team and is responsible for managing the engagement and inclusion of people with lived experience, and identifying other opportunities for inclusion and improvement across Constellation's work.
RELATIONSHIPS AND CULTURE	**Reflective learning approach**	■ Always asking questions and inviting dialogue about meaningful participation and people's needs, in ways that evolve and strengthen practice approaches. ■ Being open to positive risk taking, committed to learning when we get it wrong, and growing through feedback and reflection. ■ Investing in research and other activities to support our learning.
	Relational practice	■ Valuing and prioritising meaningful connections and collaboration, with a commitment to understanding and learning from one another. ■ Valuing feedback and reflection and encouraging open dialogue where diverse perspectives are welcomed and encouraged.

3.2 KEY PRACTICE AREAS AND STRATEGIES FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE INCLUSION

PRACTICE AREAS	PRACTICES, POLICIES AND STRUCTURES	IN PRACTICE THIS LOOKS LIKE
VALUE, PAY AND PROGRESSION	**Events**	■ **Event co-design** Paid participation of people with lived experience in design teams for every event run by Constellation. ■ **Public speaking** Paid participation on panels or as speakers. ■ **Attendance** Paid participation for attendance at events and meetings.
	Paid Participation Policy (See Appendix B)	■ A formal policy for the remuneration of people with lived experience contributing to Constellation's work, in cases where people are not being supported by other organisations to participate. The *Paid Participation Policy* sets out different levels of remuneration for different kinds of contributions. For each instance of participation Constellation draws up a paid participation offer, which serves as a formal agreement with individuals about the scope of the work and related fees. Any preparation time, briefing and debriefing, travel time etc. is paid in addition to direct contact hours.[25]
	Social labs and project teams	■ Involvement of lived experience participants in teams progressing solutions, where decisions are made about the work Constellation will pursue. This varies based on the project but could include meetings, workshops and co-design opportunities, contributing to and reviewing documents, and engaging stakeholders.

25 All activities and contributions of people with lived experience are remunerated with the exception of board member participation, which is under review at the time of writing.

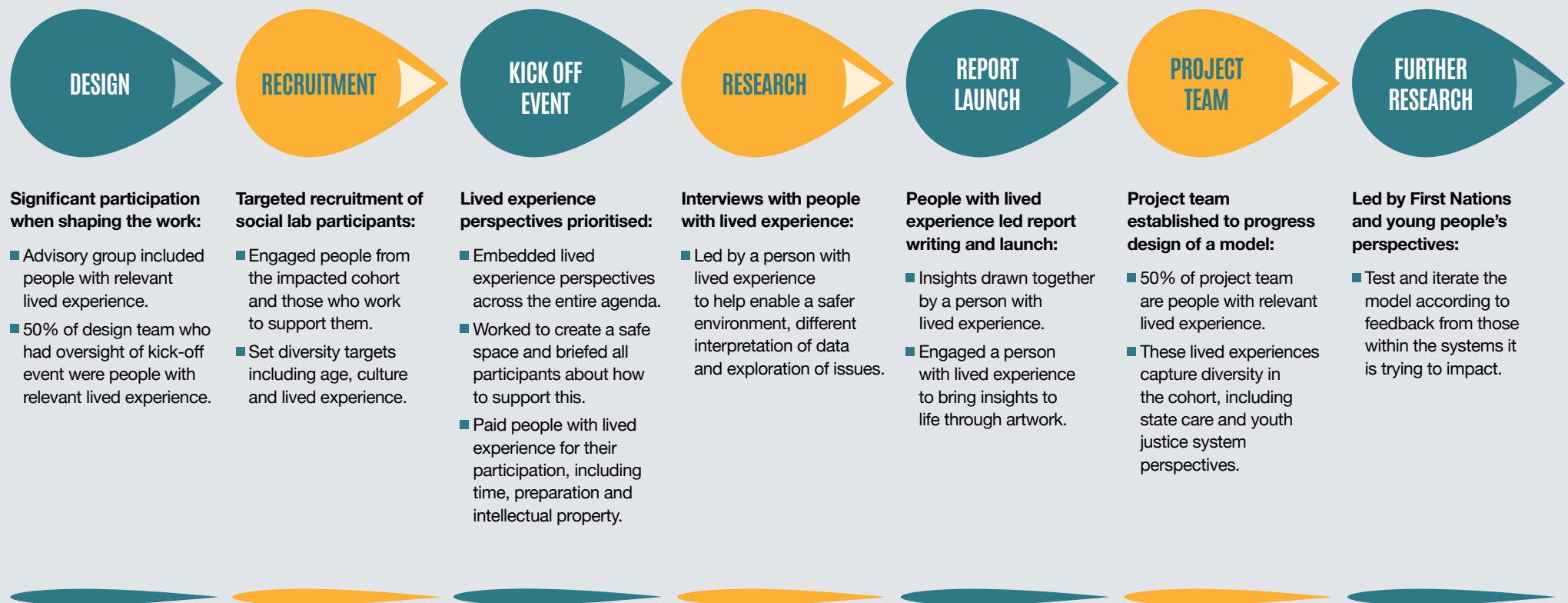## 3.3 KEY PRACTICES IN ACTION: CASE STUDY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE INCLUSION IN THE 'BETTER JOURNEYS' PROJECT

To demonstrate how some of these key practices and strategies are embedded in Constellation's work, we have used the 'Better Journeys' social lab as a case study.

Better Journeys focused on generating solutions to homelessness for young people exiting custody and out-of-home care through asking, *'how do we make sure that every 16-24 year old transitioning from custody or out-of-home care in South Australia has a home and a supportive community where they can thrive?'*

The diagram below shows how lived experience was embedded throughout the project.

DIAGRAM C.

Integrating lived experience across a project lifecycle

Significant participation when shaping the work:
- Advisory group included people with relevant lived experience.
- 50% of design team who had oversight of kick-off event were people with relevant lived experience.

Targeted recruitment of social lab participants:
- Engaged people from the impacted cohort and those who work to support them.
- Set diversity targets including age, culture and lived experience.

Lived experience perspectives prioritised:
- Embedded lived experience perspectives across the entire agenda.
- Worked to create a safe space and briefed all participants about how to support this.
- Paid people with lived experience for their participation, including time, preparation and intellectual property.

Interviews with people with lived experience:
- Led by a person with lived experience to help enable a safer environment, different interpretation of data and exploration of issues.

People with lived experience led report writing and launch:
- Insights drawn together by a person with lived experience.
- Engaged a person with lived experience to bring insights to life through artwork.

Project team established to progress design of a model:
- 50% of project team are people with relevant lived experience.
- These lived experiences capture diversity in the cohort, including state care and youth justice system perspectives.

Led by First Nations and young people's perspectives:
- Test and iterate the model according to feedback from those within the systems it is trying to impact.

3.4 CHALLENGING PRACTICE AREAS AND KEY LEARNINGS

In any project working towards systems change, deliberate efforts to interrogate and disrupt power dynamics are central to the work.

Lived experience practice inclusion in particular involves people who structurally and personally may not have had access to traditionally recognised forms of power. In including lived experience as part of its systems change work in a genuine and committed way, Constellation seeks to intentionally challenge structural and systemic power imbalances.
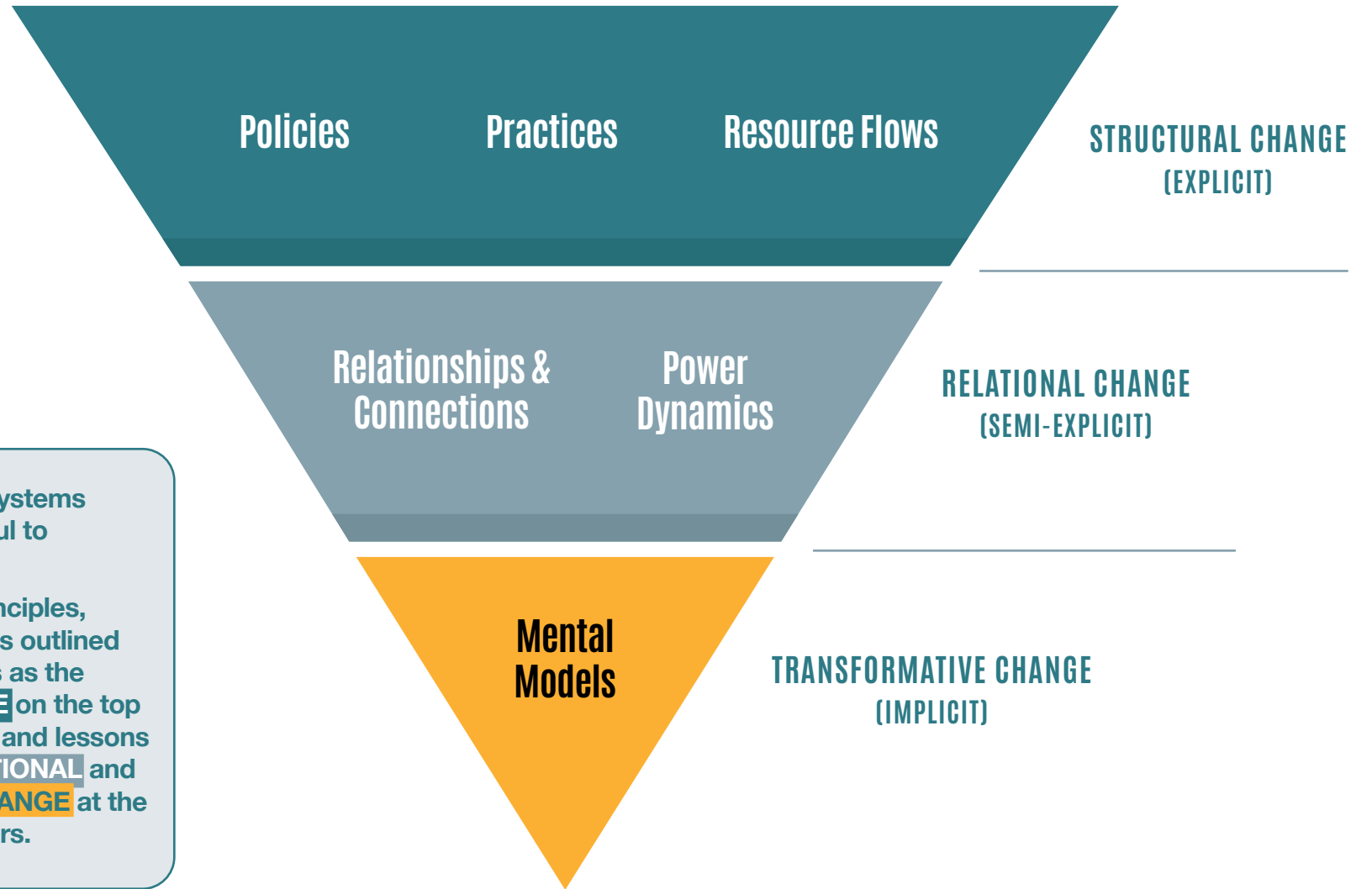
This can be testing, as people are examining and aiming to shift their own assumptions, mindsets and behaviours. Lived experience contributions can be a positive disruptor to established mindsets and structures; however the readiness for this disruption cannot be assumed, it must be consciously created.

In addition to capturing our practice model for lived experience inclusion in this framework, we also want to share some key learnings[26] from our journey over the past five years about how to create the right conditions for this work. These are the more intangible things we discovered we need to pay attention to as we're working to embed lived experience inclusion. We've also included some emerging, reflective questions that we are continuing to ask ourselves as we progress and deepen our practice.
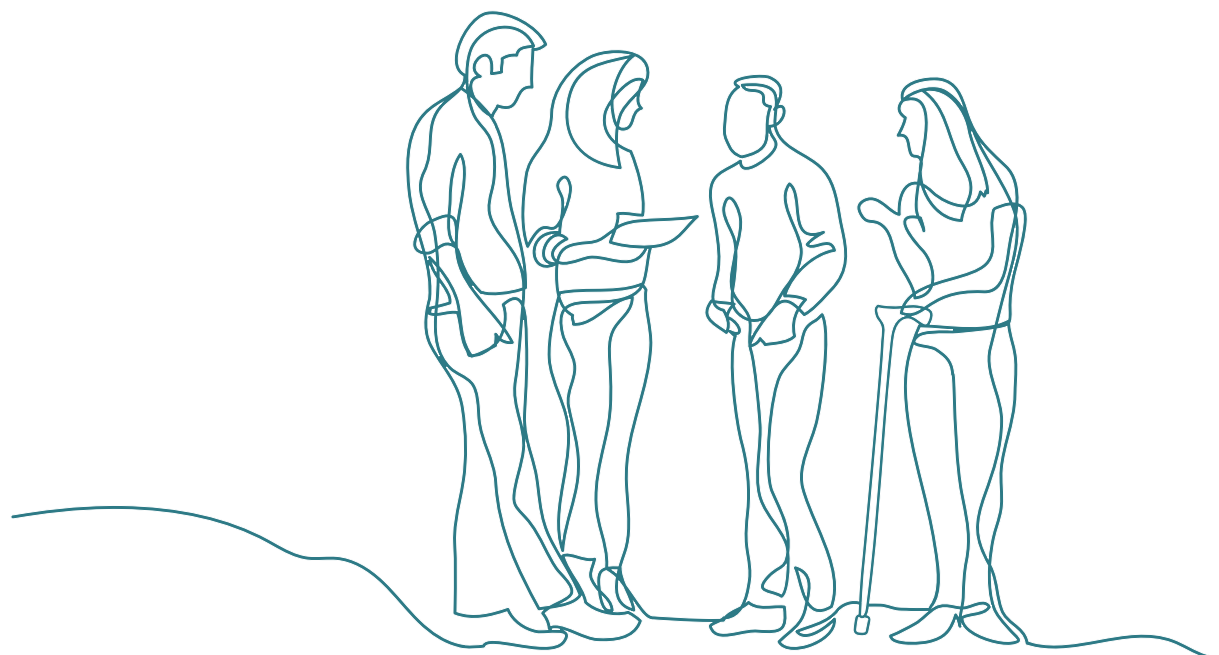
26 These key learnings are drawn from collaborative research undertaken in 2022 by RMIT Innovation Catalyst in partnership with Constellation.

Six Conditions of Systems Change

Policies   **Practices**   **Resource Flows**

STRUCTURAL CHANGE
(EXPLICIT)

Relationships & Connections   **Power Dynamics**

RELATIONAL CHANGE
(SEMI-EXPLICIT)

Mental Models

TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE
(IMPLICIT)

The Six Conditions of Systems Change[27] model is useful to conceptualise here.

We can imagine the principles, practices and processes outlined in the previous sections as the STRUCTURAL CHANGE on the top layer, and the learnings and lessons shared below as RELATIONAL and TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE at the middle and bottom layers.

27 Kania, K., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). *The Water of Systems Change.* fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change

CARE AND SUPPORT

Embedding lived experience inclusion in back-of-house functions

Sometimes HR and other business functions, which often deprioritise relational ways of working and instead default to transactional processes, call into question someone's sense of value to the work and cause distress.

When embedding lived experience practices, the ways HR, finance and other back of house functions create and contribute to barriers for people to contribute need to be examined. For example, rigid organisational policies that have standardised payment terms can get in the way of people with lived experience being paid promptly for their work.

We have found that taking the time to build relationships with staff and stakeholders who are implementing systems and policies increases understanding and acceptance of the need to be flexible and responsive in ways they may not have been otherwise.

Supporting the supporters

Providing support for lived experience participants takes time. Space needs to be created in people's workloads to balance this critical practice with other work demands. Another related challenge is the pressure that is sometimes felt by staff, both with and without lived experience, to hold space for other people's distress. This can take a toll. Those supporting the wellbeing of others also need their own supervision and support.

Shifting from 'safe' to 'safer'

We've come to understand that avoiding distress altogether and making things completely 'safe' is not possible, and now tend to think about 'relative safety' and creating 'safer spaces.'

It's not just about safety but also creating the time to have difficult and divergent conversations and using language that is considered and individualised. This makes it all the more critical to expect and plan for these moments and have strong supports in place.

Emerging practice questions:

- How do we ensure that care and safety practices are adequately resourced and delivered to a consistent standard?

- How do we incorporate First Nations thinking and practices in ways that are present to and respectful of historical and systemic harms they have experienced and continue to experience by dominant systems?

- How do we support all participants, including those who are less vocal about their needs and the impacts of participation?

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Being clear about decision-making processes

Questions of where and how decisions are made, who has permission to lead and who has authority to speak and represent the work can be contested.

Tensions can arise when hierarchical governance structures run up against the deeply contextual and lived authority held by people with lived experience, particularly when permission to lead is not negotiated or seen to be shared equitably.

Creating an environment where it is possible to reflect on how leadership and decision-making processes are working and having explicit conversations about the dynamics that support and enable the work is key.

We need to be clear about the differences between contributing, decision-making and leading, more transparent about what is able to be influenced by participants with lived experience, and what constrains decision-making.

Emerging practice questions:

- How are decisions being made about our work in terms of what is done, how it is done and who does it?

- How do we recognise traditional forms of leadership as well as more disruptive and adaptive forms of leadership? What do we do when different forms of leadership are in tension?

- How are safer spaces being created for addressing and resolving conflict in decision-making?

RELATIONSHIPS AND CULTURE

Embracing risk taking and reflective learning

Taking positive risks and a reflective approach to learning has been one of the biggest drivers behind developing and strengthening practice at Constellation. Mistakes are inevitable, but those engaged with Constellation – both with and without lived experience – persist together. They recognise that those who are involved are learning to the best of their abilities and are be open to receiving feedback, even when difficult to hear.

Understanding the difference between relational and operational culture

There is often a clash between a 'corporate' culture that emphasises operational efficiency and processes and a more relational and person-centred culture, which significantly impacts effective lived experience practice. It is essential to have a clear intention about the desired culture to support this work. This includes creating an environment where high-quality relationships can thrive, while also ensuring the work progresses efficiently. Striking a balance between these two aspects is key.

Emerging practice questions:

- What are we learning about organisational and sector cultures that look to support lived experience and cross-sector working?

- What else do we need to consider regarding culture shifts and capacity and capability development to set up for success as we move forward?

VALUE, PAY AND PROGRESSION

Paid participation being underpinned by a clear policy

Paying people with lived experience for their contributions and expertise is non-negotiable. There has been a lot of learning over the years to establish Constellation's *Paid Participation Policy* and we've found it essential to have a formalised and open process to pay people for different kinds of contributions.
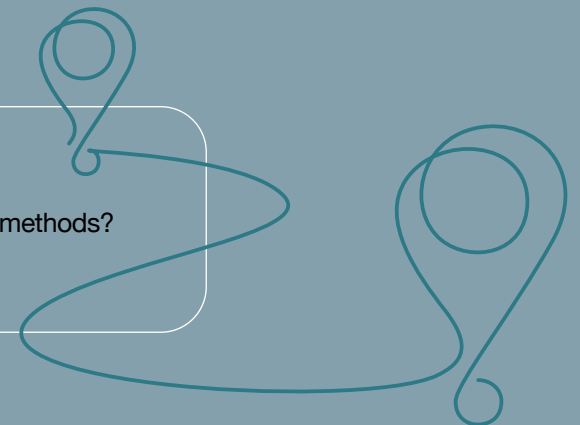
This has allowed us to take the principle of valuing lived experience contributions in the way we would other forms of expertise and put it into practice. Our understanding of and approaches to paid participation are constantly evolving in line with maturing good practice standards, the feedback we receive, and new learnings.

Value goes beyond pay

Valuing people with lived experience goes beyond financial compensation. It also involves providing practical support, tools, and resources that support or enhance their participation and engagement. This could include paying for travel and accommodation, assisting with internet costs, or investing in career progression and skill building opportunities for people with lived experience engaged in the work.

Emerging practice questions:

- Is our approach to paying participants with lived experience transparent, accessible, and does it offer choices for payment methods?
- What other ways could we enable and fund professional development pathways for participants with lived experience?

VOICE AND IDENTITY
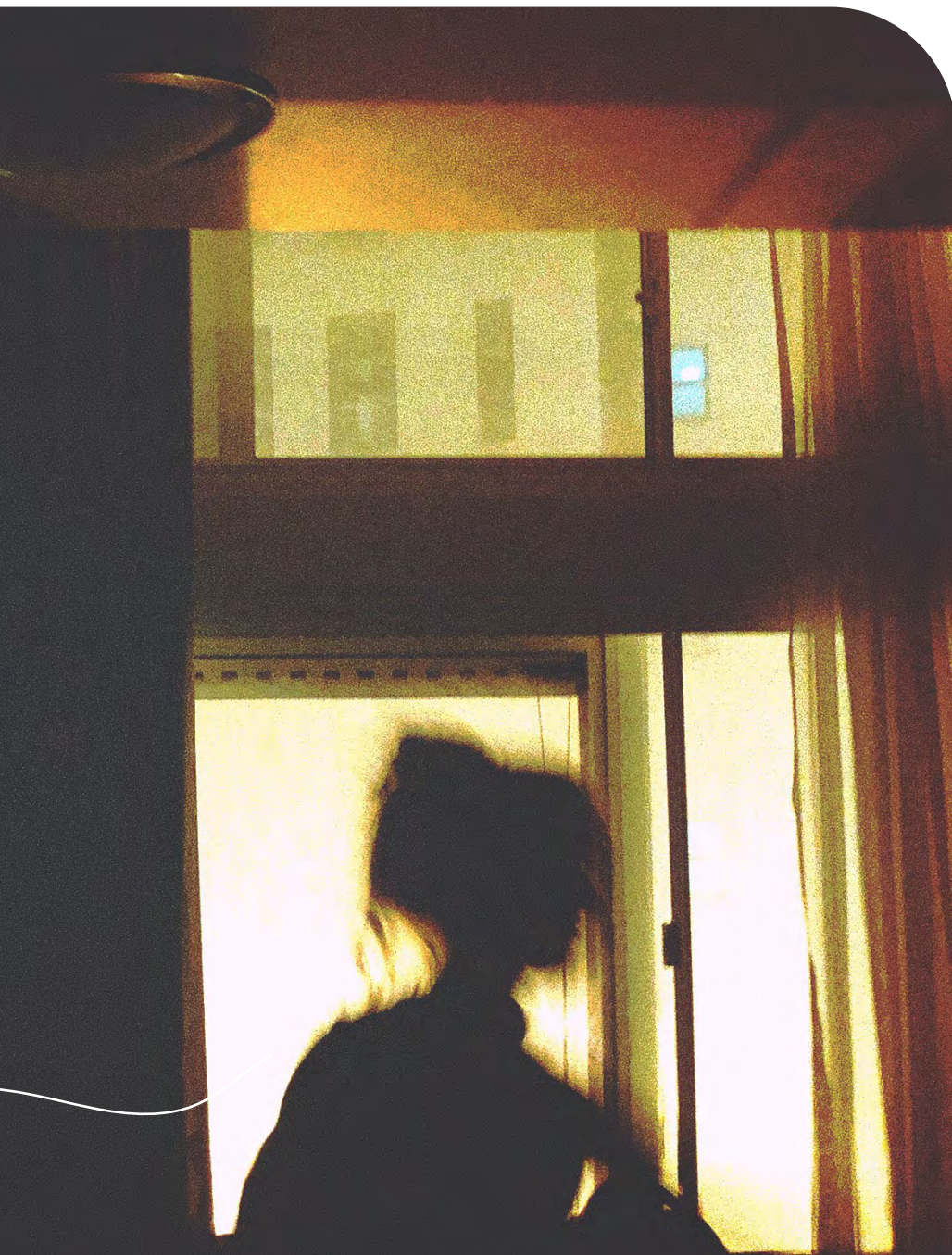
Moving beyond singular identities

Being in an identified lived experience role can be a challenging position. The weight and expectations of being the sole representative with explicit lived experience can be a heavy burden to carry. Sharing personal aspects of oneself and having a paid role closely linked to a specific experience can be challenging.

It may feel as though other skills and experiences are overlooked, leaving little room for recognition of someone's full range of capabilities. To overcome the burden of other people's perceptions, both spoken and unspoken, it is essential to foster an open and authentic environment that recognises people as multifaceted, and create the space required for people to bring the fullness of their diverse skills, experiences and perspectives.

Paying attention to whose voices are heard

Systemic, institutional, and cultural structures that privilege more traditional forms of expertise are hard to change. Whose voices get heard, what counts as 'knowledge' when it comes to solutions to homelessness, and whether people are really being heard are all issues that need to be grappled with when creating space for lived experience contributions.

Not making assumptions about people's experiences

When bringing people together, we work with the assumption that many people have experienced housing insecurity, homelessness and/or trauma. Not everyone will want to disclose this or self-identify as having lived experience and it is not always possible to predict who will need extra supports or be unsettled by the challenging subject matter at the heart of our work.

Emerging practice questions:

- How are a diversity of voices, views, and forms of knowledge being brought together?
- What kinds of power dynamics play out in our work and what ends up counting as most important?
- How can we better value people with lived experience in our project teams and work?

3.5 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND FEEDBACK

It is essential to create structured feedback opportunities that actively involve lived experience participants shaping practice. This can be achieved through various means, such as surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews or conversations, and participatory workshops.

Evaluating the outcomes of projects is critical to ensuring their effectiveness, relevance, and continuous improvement. Incorporating the feedback and perspectives of individuals with lived experience is paramount in shaping and refining these practices.

Embracing a culture of learning and growing is fundamental to the success of lived experience inclusion and practice. We recognise the importance of ongoing evaluation and feedback loops to anchor this framework, and are committed to investing in research and other activities that will help us to improve.

What we learn will be used to drive iterative improvements, ensuring that our practice remains responsive, relevant, and impactful. By incorporating feedback into decision-making processes – strategies, policies, and practices can be adapted to address emerging needs and deliver more effective outcomes.

3.6 FUTURE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

Aligned with a focus on continued improvement, a number of areas have emerged in Constellation's work that would benefit from further exploration. We share them here in the spirit of collaboration and as an indication of where we can focus future efforts.

▶ Organisational readiness

A critical factor when it comes to lived experience inclusion involves assessing an organisation's capacity, willingness, and preparedness to embed lived experience into its operations, practices, and culture.

▶ Evolving paid participation arrangements

Specifically for those in identified roles on the board who don't have organisational backing or support.

### ▶ Understanding the appropriate mix of senior advisory roles

Including whether one lived experience identified board member role is the right quota and/or whether another structure, such an executive advisory group, could better support inclusive governance.

▶ Supporting the establishment of a community of practice

To further lived experience inclusion and capacity building across organisations working to reduce homelessness and increase housing affordability.

▶ Considering Constellation's broader systems contribution

To support the evolution and maturing of the broader lived experience workforce.
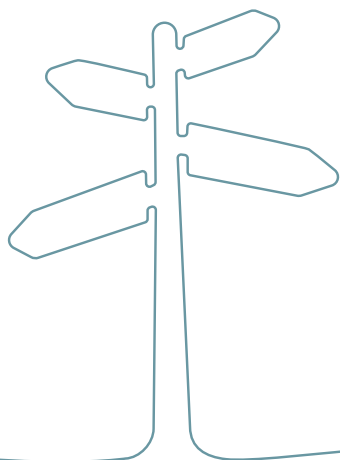
APPENDIX A.
GROUNDING CONCEPTS AT A GLANCE

A VISUAL SUMMARY OF THE GROUNDING CONCEPTS THAT UNDERPIN CONSTELLATION'S LIVED EXPERIENCE PRACTICE.

Anti-oppressive practice

Anti-oppressive practice helps us to:

- **Focus** on how larger systems contribute to inequality
- **Engage** in critical reflection and action
- **Step back** and think about the impacts of our policies and practice approaches
- **Understand** that change needs to occur not just in systems but within us too.

What does this way of thinking bring to our approaches?

- **Discern** who are the most vulnerable to experiencing homelessness
- **Critique** the structures and barriers in place that keep people vulnerable
- **Partner** with those most affected to identify barriers and imagine alternatives.

Human rights lens

Empowerment and participation is essential to progressing human rights.

What does this way of thinking bring to our approaches?

Homelessness as an issue

- Homelessness is not just a social issue but a human rights one.
- Everyone has the right to access safe, supported and affordable housing.

Lived experience inclusion as a practice

- Engagement and participation is not 'a nice thing to have', it is a human rights obligation.
- Those who understand homelessness best are those who experience the issue first-hand.

Participatory design

This approach shifts the frame of people with lived experience from being **passive recipients to active participants.**

What does this way of thinking bring to our approaches?

- **We better identify** what needs to be done and how to approach it
- **We get closer to the source** through including and partnering with people with relevant lived experience
- **We decide together** through having people with lived experience as active contributors in every project, process and event.

Systems thinking

Systems thinking is a way of approaching a problem by:

- **Looking** at it from multiple perspectives
- **Seeing** through the lens of those wrestling with it
- **Helping** to expose the root causes that hold it in place.

What does this way of thinking bring to our approaches?

- **We look through a wider lens** to see the broader picture before we act or intervene
- **We develop discernment** to decide if we are best placed to have a role and what that role might be
- **We understand deeper context** when designing approaches and responses
- **We form better partnerships** through thinking more carefully about who we collaborate with
- **We zoom out** to consider the influence of intersecting issues.

Trauma aware and responsive practice

Being trauma aware and responsive helps us to:

- **Become conscious** of the real-life and visceral impacts of social issues
- **Understand the impacts** of systemic trauma as well as individual affects
- **Realise that** navigating service systems can be traumatic in and of itself.

What does this way of thinking bring to our approaches?

- **We have a shared understanding** about concepts and impacts
- **We collectively foster trust** and cultivate relationships over time
- **We think carefully and plan** for the right external partners, consultants and stakeholders
- **We develop greater accuracy** through taking the time to seek feedback, actively reflect, and make changes when we get it wrong.

Valuing lived experience

Valuing lived experience brings:

- **Unique perspectives** rooted in personal encounters with real-life situations
- **Complements** other forms of knowledge, such as theoretical
- **Contributes** to more inclusive and effective approaches.

What does this way of thinking bring to our approaches?

- **Challenge** historical ways of making decisions and solving problems
- **Get clearer** on unintended consequences and potential harm
- **Equips us to imagine** outside the box with the unlike-minded
- **Helps us get better** at engaging and partnering with people and communities.

APPENDIX B.
CONSTELLATION'S PAID PARTICIPATION POLICY

Constellation's paid participation approach has a descriptive background document that includes a tiered payment table and accompanying forms.

Purpose of this document

This document provides information about how Constellation engages and pays people with lived experience of homelessness.

What is paid participation?

Paid participation refers to compensating people for their involvement in activities, initiatives, or projects. It recognises the value that individuals with lived experience bring and acknowledges the time, effort, skill, and knowledge they contribute. This may include activities such as providing feedback on Constellation's work, participating in research, attending meetings, or engaging in other forms of collaboration.

We are committed to paying people who contribute their lived experience, insights and time as independent contractors on the project. Participants are paid for their time based on the depth and duration of their contributions. We pay participants based on a tiered payment structure, at an hourly rate. For example, if a meeting lasts for 1 hour and 30 minutes, the participant will be paid for 2 hours.

In addition to payment for time and expertise, we will pay for things that support participation, or any out-of-pocket expenses. This may include expenses such as transport, parking, or other costs related to people's involvement.

It is important to note that in some cases, payments may impact participants' other financial considerations and expenses. If a participant raises concerns regarding this, we work to be flexible and can adjust payment arrangements. For instance, payments can be made in smaller installments to accommodate specific needs.

NOTE: If a participant is invited to travel interstate as part of their participation, Constellation will arrange and pay for travel, accommodation, and travel time.

Who is eligible for paid participation?

Each project or activity within Constellation has its own focus area. This means we seek to involve people whose lived experience aligns with these specific focus areas, projects or activities. For example, a project may focus on a solution to homelessness, specific to domestic and family violence. We would then aim to involve people who have relevant lived experience at the intersection of these areas.

We welcome participation from individuals aged 16 years and above.

NOTE: If a participant is already being paid for their contribution through representing an organisation or another professional role, paid participation from Constellation does not apply.

Process of involvement

The process of participation of people with lived experience in our work is as follows:

1. People with lived experience who would like to be involved can express their interest at any time by sending an email to livedexperience@theconstellationproject.com.au

2. Constellation's Lived Experience and Project Coordinator will then be in touch to discuss further details. This person is someone who also has lived experience of homelessness and will coordinate and support the contributions of lived experience participants.

3. Participants will be asked to share information about their support strategies and what we can do to make the environment and process safer or more comfortable for them.

4. Relevant opportunities that align with participants' experience and skills will be offered through what we call a *'letter of offer'*. This letter includes detailed information about the participation opportunity, such as time commitments and payment details.

5. Participants will be sent and asked to complete a *Personal Details Form* and if applicable, a *Statement by a Supplier Form*, for individuals without an Australian Business Number (ABN).[28]

6. Once all forms have been submitted and approved, the Lived Experience and Project Coordinator will arrange a meeting to discuss the opportunity in more detail, address any questions or concerns, and ensure a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and next steps.

NOTE: No formal qualifications or prerequisites are required for individuals to contribute their lived experience.

How personal information is protected

Constellation respects the right to privacy. We understand that information shared with us may be sensitive. All personal information is stored on a secure database, only accessible by Constellation's executive team. Our privacy policy can be found on our website.

Right to withdraw

Participants can withdraw their consent at any time if they feel unable to continue by contacting the Lived Experience and Project Coordinator. This will not affect payment or any future opportunities for participation.

Feedback process

Complaints and feedback can be directed to the following Constellation team members:

- Lived Experience and Project Coordinator
- Chief Executive Officer
- Board representative(s) with lived experience.

Review process

We aim to review this approach every 6 months, or as feedback and evolving good practice standards and benchmarking is available to us.

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28 Legal forms include a *'Statement by a supplier not quoting an ABN'* from the Australian Taxation Office. ato.gov.au/forms-and-instructions/statement-by-supplier-not-quoting-an-abn

APPENDIX C.
TYPES OF CONTRIBUTION AND PAYMENT RATES TABLE

This table is Constellation's paid participation structure at the time of publication of this framework.

Payment is tiered based on the level of involvement required for different activities.

Our approach is reviewed regularly and responsive to evolving practice and feedback shared with us.

This does not include other reimbursements or supports that people may require to ensure their participation, such as transport and access to technology etc.

LEVEL OF INFLUENCE

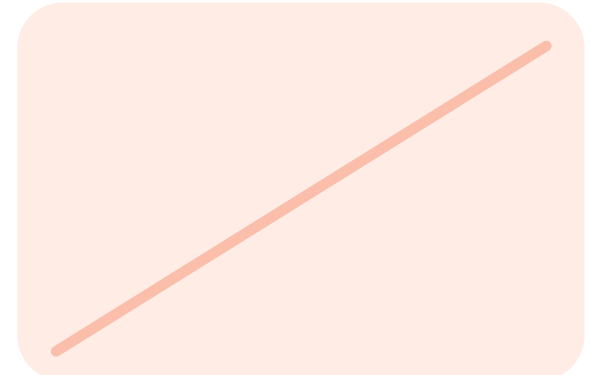|	Participation in or advice about Constellation	External meetings and presentations	Media interviews
High ($90/hr)	→ **Invited to be a member of a panel or to facilitate part of a workshop.** *E.g. Sashi speaks as part of a panel which is designed to set the scene during a workshop. The panel runs for 40 mins and she is paid in hourly blocks for the panel and any preparation time.*	→ **Invited to organise and/or co-lead a meeting with external stakeholders.** → **Invited to represent Constellation as a member of an external panel or present to an external audience.** *E.g. Sashi sits on a panel at a national homelessness conference representing Constellation.*	→ **Invited to do a media interview for radio or television.** *E.g. Sashi is interviewed by a news broadcasting show about her participation in Constellation and how her perspective is informing solutions to homelessness.*
Medium ($77/hr)	→ **Invited to join an advisory group or give feedback about the way Constellation engages.** *E.g. Frankie has a specific experience of homelessness and is invited to join an advisory group that guides a piece of work related to their lived experience. The advisory group meets 3 times over 6 months and Frankie is also paid for any work they are asked to do between sessions.*	→ **Invited to attend a stakeholder meeting with Constellation.** *E.g. Frankie joins Constellation's CEO for an online meeting with a potential funder. They speak about why lived experience voices are critical and answer questions about their experience of the project's engagement.*	→ **Invited to do a media interview or provide content for print/online publication.** NB: Constellation must approve content prior to publication *E.g. Frankie provides a quote and information drawn from their experiences to inform a case study that is being included in an online report. They choose to use a pseudonym to protect their identity.*
Low ($44/hr)	→ **Invited to contribute perspectives on the project's content.** *E.g. Sam actively participates as a member of a project team and actively draws from his lived experience and skills.* *Sam is a participant in a workshop and provides commentary on the content discussed during the session, drawing from his lived experience.*		

Rates last updated: 10 July 2024

The Constellation Project