



REFLECTIVE RESOURCE

# How ready, willing and able are you to embark on an authentic co-design process?

This reflective resource is designed to support both individuals and teams to understand how ready, willing and able you are to embark on an authentic co-design process.

THE  
AUSTRALIAN  
CENTRE FOR  
SOCIAL  
INNOVATION



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*LELAN and TACSI acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live, work and play on. We pay our respects to elders – past, present and emerging; and we pay our respects to the long and ongoing connection and relationship they have with this Country.*

*We acknowledge that this land was never ceded. We are grateful for the privilege of sharing this land and recognise and are sorry for the historic and continued cost of that sharing to First Nations People.*



Written by:

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# The LELAN & TACSI partnership

In 2020, LELAN and TACSI worked in partnership with people from the South Australian lived experience community to co-create a Philosophy of Care to inform the new Urgent Mental Health Care Centre (UMHCC) in Adelaide. This was commissioned by the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist SA.

Out of this work emerged a resource with a set of reflective statements, which we have continued to use to foster a mutual, honest and authentic relationship, and ultimately be accountable with each other.

Since then we have continued to reflect on our working relationship to date. In recognising our aligned values and the impact we want to create, we have been acknowledging ourselves as a partnership; one that will grow and evolve.

We believe this reflective resource will be helpful for people looking to understand how ready, willing and able they are to embark on an authentic co-design process.

## A note on language

LELAN and TACSI draw on the following definition of lived experience for this resource and our collective work:

*In the lived experience movement we define 'lived experience' as experiences of mental distress, social issues or injustice that have caused life as we knew it to change so significantly we have to reimagine and redefine ourselves, our place in the world and our future plans.... Importantly, it's about learning how to use those experiences in a way that's useful to other people.*

– Byrne, L & Wykes,

We have learnt that, for some people, acknowledging historical and current experiences is an important distinction, which is why we have used the language lived and/or living experiences in our narrative.

# Why LELAN & TACSI?

Both organisations believe in the power of partnerships. We believe that no one person or institution can tackle the complex social problems society is experiencing and facing right now and into our future.

In essence, we work towards being collaborative in all of our work, working with people, sharing expertise and co-creating impactful outcomes. We know all of this is done best when people with lived and/or living experiences of the issues we seek to solve are involved as partners in all stages of what it takes to create better outcomes.

## We co-created an ethic for how to do this together:

- We wish to model our partnership through sharing the work we do together with the world
- We want our partnership to be ‘seen’ in how we present to others when in co-creation. We are in this together
- There is a knowing that what each brings matters, and that this can create challenge and discomfort for us to work through with compassion
- We trust each other to share our partnership experience and the resources we co-create far and wide
- We have a commitment to be in a helpful and continuous state of mutual learning

JUMP TO  
RESOURCE  
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# Thoughts on co-design

While writing the reflective resource, we reflected on what co-design means to us. We've learnt that uncertainty and discomfort (not knowing what the outcome will be) are actually helpful indicators that let us know we are in it.

When we do feel discomfort, we find it helpful to remind ourselves of what this means in the co-design context and remember these four things:

1. It's okay to not know where you'll end up but trust that you will get there
2. It's important to name, address and share power
3. Continue to learn together, and build capability and relationships
4. Bringing our previous co-design experience to the table helps to create a structure that supports exploration and adaptation

We also reflected on how there are many examples of work out there claiming to be co-design, when in actual fact it's often consultation or another form of participation.

When done well, consultation and other forms of involvement can yield great experiences and benefits. However, when something that is not co-design claims to be so, this can do harm and break trust between systems, services and people.

If your scope only allows for a consultation process, great clarity and trust can be built from being transparent about that. Then, the job to be done is to strive for creating the conditions and mindsets that will eventually support you to work towards an authentic co-design process. These steps can be small yet profound.



# How to use this reflective resource

Being ready, willing and able is about having commitment, resources and permission to work authentically 'with' people through intentions and in practice.

This reflective resource is designed to support both individuals and teams to understand where they are at and how ready, willing and able you are to embark on an authentic co-design process.

This reflective resource will support you and your team to understand what your strengths are, so that you can acknowledge them more explicitly. It will also support you to identify what's getting in the way of doing authentic co-design, so you can acknowledge that too and build a case to overcome such challenges.

The reflective resource is not designed to give you a complete picture of your skill or readiness to embark on co-design, but is

intended to be a contribution to understanding your own practice and commitment to co-design with people with lived and/or living experiences.

We hope that it supports you to have reflective conversations, and with others, grapple with some of the hard stuff, in particular power imbalances and elements of organisational culture that may be holding you/us back.

- Take time to read and explore the reflective resource; either by yourself, with your team, or across your organisation and chosen networks
- You may choose to use the reflective statements to create your own tool, or use them in authentic conversation and reflection. Either way, it's about starting the conversation and supporting improved practice, especially around partnering with people with lived and/or living experiences.



## HOW TO USE THIS REFLECTIVE RESOURCE CONT.

- We believe this work is deeper than a solo assessment at the beginning or end of a process, rather there is a bigger opportunity for you to consider where you are at, what this means in your context and consider steps and actions towards authentic co-design. At its heart, co-design is about mutuality, collaboration, sharing power together and ongoing learning.
- There is no right or wrong way to use this reflective resource. As an offer you may find it helpful to map your reflections on a spectrum such as:
  - Unsure yet open
  - Taking steps and asking questions
  - Progressing and trying things out
  - Succeeding and always learning
- ‘Co’ is a process deeply rooted in values, transformation and rich diversity. It may feel overwhelming at first but by considering the conditions around you, you may be more ready, willing and able than you think. Even if you discover a number of obstacles within your own practice or across your team, this resource will hopefully support you with the words to face them and this is still a great starting point.
- The reflective statements are written in a way that prompts generative inquiry rather than yes or no responses. We have learnt that co-design is about embodying values and demonstrating these values in action. This in itself can take time.



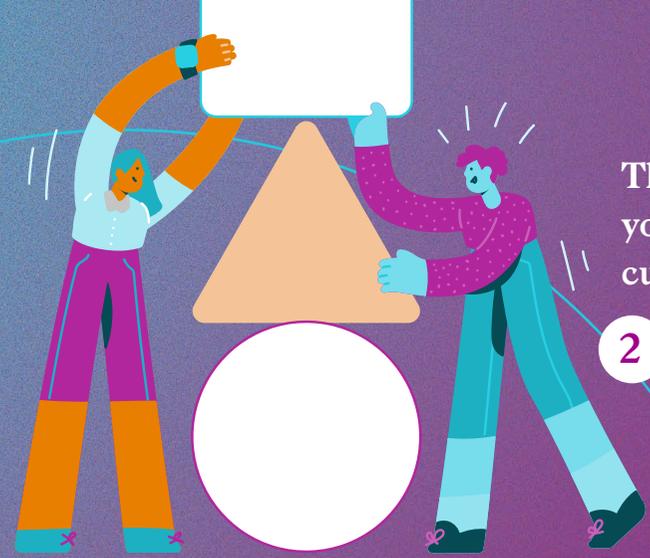
Committing to involving people with lived experience

1



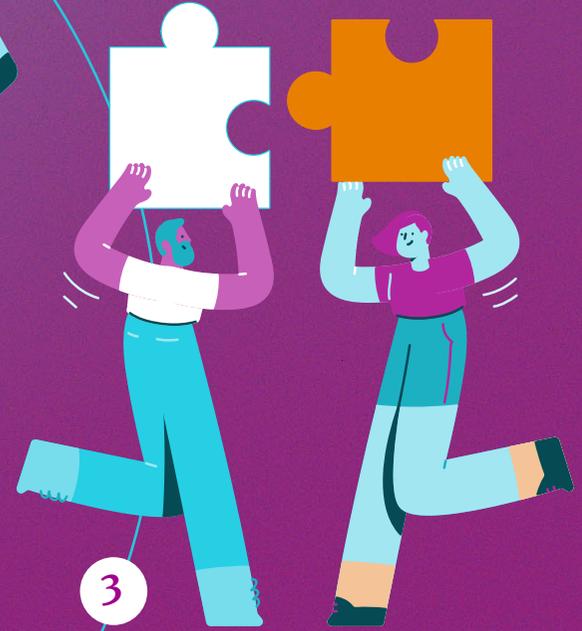
Thinking about your organisation's culture

2



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# How ready, willing and able are you to embark on an authentic co-design process?

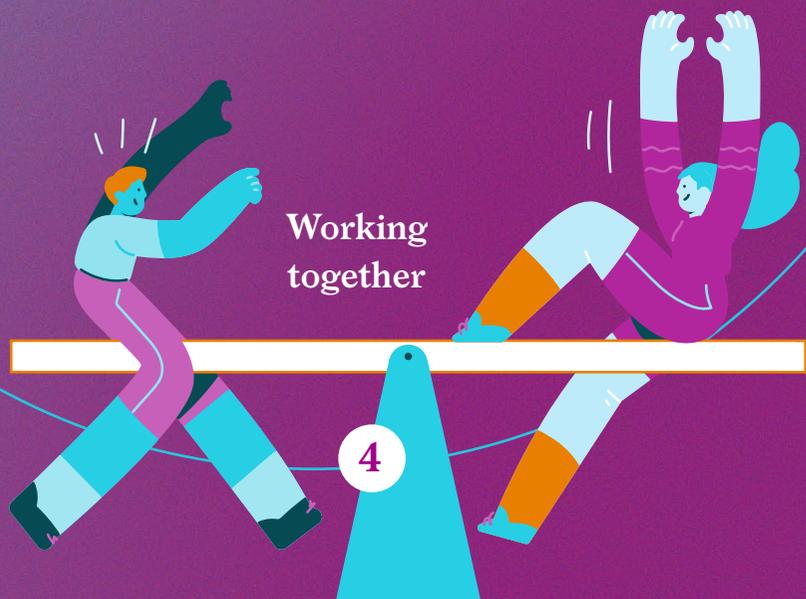


3

Your approach to co-design

Working together

4



Your reflection

5



# Committing to involving people with lived experience

- There is a declaration at the senior level that authentic lived experience involvement is valuable, necessary and encouraged at all stages of this process
- We view people with lived experience as having equal expertise to those viewed as ‘experts’ in the sector.
- We know listening and learning from the voices of people with lived experience is not an optional extra. Instead of using our knowledge and experience to avoid curiosity or discomfort, we lean into it.
- We are open to making lived experience perspective and people part of our decision making
- We have the tools and capability to ensure lived experience perspectives are part of the decision making process.
- We share back how people’s involvement is acted upon and people with lived experience can easily call us to account.



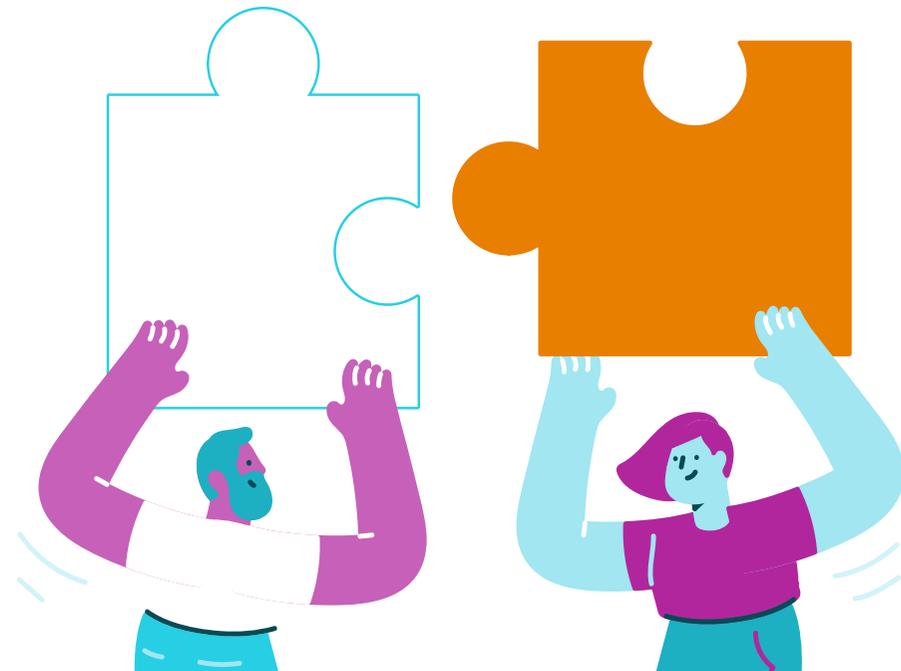
# Thinking about your organisation's culture

- There is explicit permission and ongoing support to try something new.
- There is a blame free environment that allows staff to design and run innovative approaches. Nobody is expected to have all the answers.
- There is support for trying things out in small ways before piloting or implementation.
- There is a culture of learning through prototyping, testing and refining.
- We are ok with being in the grey. We know answers aren't clear cut or the solutions obvious. We spend time understanding a challenge before trying to respond to it.



## Your approach to co-design

- People who facilitate and convene co-design processes have dedicated time to do it. Co-design isn't treated as an add on to an otherwise full workload.
- Staff involved in co-design are supported to develop new behaviours and practices. They know who to reach out to and don't feel alone.
- There is access to funding to support the next steps and output(s) of a co-design process. We stop things that don't work to invest in those that do.
- If we start a co-design process, we follow through beyond research and testing. We know implementation is where outcomes come to life.
- We will seek out participants who are part of or in tune with their culture or different identity groups. We have co-design models created and delivered within different world views.
- There is funding to run co-design projects, including making sure people with lived experience fair financial compensation for their time and travel.
- We invest in building the skills of people with lived experience to contribute from the start enabling them to be active co-designers, delivery partners and co-evaluators.
- We believe that given the opportunity people with lived experience can lead change work.



## Working together

- Power imbalances often exist between health and social sector professionals and people with lived experience when they come together. We have identified practices to make sure power is distributed.
- Connected, open and transparent processes exist which help all people and parties (including those with lived experience) to participate in decision making and to ‘own’ desired outcomes
- We understand the specific mix of skills, experiences, attitudes and supports needed for this to work and take ownership to work creatively together, leading to great outcomes.
- There is an acknowledgement of everyone’s contribution to the outcomes, especially the role that people with lived experience play.
- As staff, we are willing to consider mindsets or practices that may need to shift within us in order to support the success of the work. E.g. From expert to student



## Your reflection

- I am comfortable with co-design as a concept, see the value in it and look forward to the day that it is standard practice.
- How WILLING to adopt an approach of valuing, learning from and involving authentic lived experience, co-design and innovation practice would you rate your team?
- How READY to adopt an approach of valuing, learning from and involving authentic lived experience, co-design and innovation practice would you rate your team?
- What do you personally and/or your team need to be more ready, willing and able to maximise the potential of co-design with people with lived experience?

