

# DO NO HARM

## EQUITABLE PRACTICE



### Why this is critical?

Before planning meetings and collaboration with community members and people with diverse lived experience organisations need to understand three things:

- Power dynamics within the relationships.
- How these dynamics play out; and
- What ways of working cause harm and are 'not inclusive and safe'

***Not everyone can be in a meeting at the same time!***

***Getting everyone in the same room at the same time is a colonial exercise. - Brooke Prentis, Wakka Wakka woman.***



### Power dynamics and how they play out

There are power dynamics in the relationships between professionals and people with lived experience (and between people with lived experiences themselves). The structural disadvantages that enable these power differences are not always seen by the person/s working to provide support services to people, or the people leading LE engagement. Most social service system structures come from a charity model which is inherently a 'power over' model of service.

To effectively include people with lived experience in how the service operates, these power dynamics need to be addressed.

Power sits within relationships. People providing supports may be unaware of the power differences because the people with lived experience are happy with the service, and/or are willing to provide feedback into the service.

People with lived experience may need to overcome their own unconscious bias of a lack of power (and histories of being ignored, not listened to, demeaned and discriminated against).

Services need to build trust over time through the redistribution of power and resources. This is done through relationship, transparency and by dismantling and addressing these power differences. To do this organisation staff need to:

- Be honest and open about what they can and will do to share power
- Allow for trust to be created, restored and repaired as needed
- Providing authentic inclusive engagement processes
- Understand how decolonisation, transparency, redistribution and relationship is actually experienced by service users; and
- Know that meeting inclusivity is only an ingredient of the larger inclusion and intersectional pie.



# EQUITABLE PRACTICE BARRIERS TO EQUITY

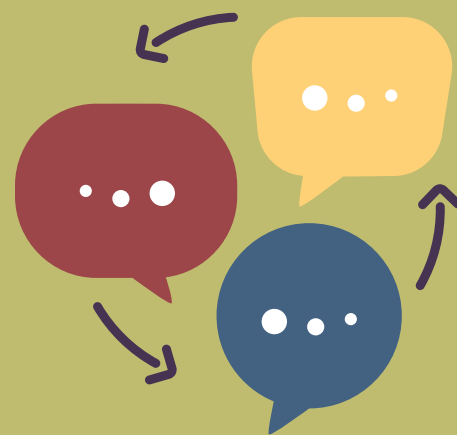


## *What creates barriers to equity and inclusion? (this list is not complete):*

- Inviting one person with lived experience to participate - having a 'go to' person with Lived experience or a 'go to' Elder
- Having a venue upstairs, a venue which is difficult to get to and / or requires prior knowledge of a campus or venue
- Starting a meeting at 9am in the city, or between 7am and 9am online.
- Appearing to be inclusive by ticking boxes, instead of providing equitable participation.
- Assuming you (or your organisation) know what will make people with lived experience comfortable.
- Thinking that people coming to the engagement means that they are equitably participating.
- Making assumptions and not being transparent about them
- Refusing to unlearn, being an 'expert'
- Addressing diversity, but not the intersectionality of people and their communities (multiple intersecting diversities)
- Having an in-person meeting with no accessible hybrid online participation options
- Heavy scents and perfumes, inadequate ventilation
- Events during fires, heatwaves or other significant events
- Lifts with steps

While it is important to follow principles of 'universal access' and inclusivity, you also need to ask participants if they have any particular access requirements. People with Lived Experience expertise may face barriers to attending a face-to-face meeting that are not within your experience or awareness.

It is important to think about how and when to ask for people's accommodation and access needs. For instance doing so early on, and consulting to make sure accessibility and inclusivity solutions are appropriate, makes it easier to design inclusive and equitable engagement rather than making last minute changes.



*"Flexibility is important due to the unpredictable nature of people's disabilities and intersecting structural disadvantage. Peoples's needs may change from one day to the next, and sometimes within a day. It is critical to be listening for, and responding with care to the people you are collaborating with."*



# EQUITABLE PRACTICE

## ORGANISATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS



### *An incomplete list of what organisations need to consider when collaborating with people with diverse lived experiences:*

- What do people with Lived Experience need in order to feel safe enough to share their accessibility needs, their priorities and contribute their knowledge?
  - Are we as an organisation ready and willing to hear what people with Lived Experience have to say (without being defensive and protective of the status quo)?
  - Have we allocated resources (including but not limited to people and time) to ensure the people we are asking to share their experience have adequate support to do so?
  - Are we aware of the different power dynamics within our organisations, between the organisation/us and people with lived experience and between people with lived experience?
  - What do we want to avoid? Where are we stuck and unable to move, what are our limitations? Do we have executive support for things being uncomfortable?
  - Timelines - plenty of lead time is needed, it will ALWAYS take longer than you think.
  - Have we considered physical accessibility?
  - What are the technological needs / requirements for equitable participation?
  - What knowledge is required for people with lived experience to provide input - if pre reading is required how is this supported?
  - Are materials provided in formats that are accessible and understandable?
  - How are we providing for continuous and ongoing free prior and informed consent?
  - Can we provide different seating, standing and laying options, e.g. can people equitably participate from their beds if unwell
  - Create a basic checklist for venues and activities
  - Language used (avoid ableist, racist, sexist, etc...) AND call out /gently correct these behaviours
  - Use plain English language, explaining terms where needed.
  - Explain acronyms, consider having acronym cheat sheet for participants.
  - Provide ways for people to ask clarifying questions
  - Show value to all input, have processes to demonstrate folk are heard
- Considerations for sensory accommodations:
    - Consider low fragrance needs. Perfumes and odours in the venue may trigger sensory responses and/or allergies (including automatic toilet sprays).
    - Consider sound and lighting accommodations - can you use alternate venues and spaces if need be.
    - Thermo considerations: heating and cooling options (check they are working when the venue is booked)
    - Describing visual information and materials for those with visual impairments and/or learning difficulties, neurodiversity or different ways of knowing and being.
    - Is an Auslan interpreter needed?
    - Is visual and written information accessible?
    - Are there captions on any videos shared?