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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Alliance celebrates its first independent Chairperson, Mathew Fagan
– and welcomes new Interim Chairperson, Leilani Darwin.**

The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance today celebrates the contribution of its first independent Chairperson, Mathew Fagan, as he steps down with the Alliance's establishment phase complete – and proudly announces the election of Leilani Darwin, a proud Nunukul Quandamooka woman, as the Alliance's new Interim Chairperson.

Mr Fagan took on the role as the Alliance's first independent Chairperson in 2024, with the task of stewarding the new organisation through its establishment phase and helping build a durable, credible and genuinely consumer-led federated Alliance.

“Everything worth celebrating in this role has been accomplished shoulder-to-shoulder with mental health consumers, whose insights, courage and persistence are humbling,” said Mr Fagan. “And I am so very pleased the Board has placed its trust in Leilani, whom I deeply admire and respect.”

“I thank my fellow Board members; the Alliance's CEO and national office team; all the staff in the State/Territory member organisations; and every consumer who has contributed their time, lived expertise and hard-won wisdom to the Alliance. You make this role a privilege,” he continued.

The Alliance is deeply grateful to Mr Fagan for leadership and vision that helped the Alliance realise numerous achievements, including, but not limited to:

- Establishment of the Australian Association of Peer Workers – a landmark achievement giving Australia's mental health peer workforce its own national professional association for the first time.

- Genuine allyship with the Indigenous Australians Lived Experience Centre, and the establishment and admission of Lived Experience Northern Territory, completing the Alliance's national federated membership.
- The Alliance Strategic Plan 2026–2028 and a detailed Theory of Change and Outcomes Framework for a consumer-led mental health system.

“Mathew's strategic leadership has provided the Alliance with the foundations to advocate for the implementation of real change in the next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement and promote the Alliance's proposal for a National Psychosocial Support Scheme,” added Mx Priscilla Brice, CEO of the Alliance.

Board welcomes new Interim Chairperson

The Board welcomes Ms Leilani Darwin, Independent Director and newly elected Interim Chairperson of the Alliance — bringing First Nations lived experience leadership to the head of Australia's national consumer voice. Ms Darwin is a proud Nunukul Quandamooka woman from Stradbroke Island, based in Meeanjin (Brisbane), and joined the Alliance's Board in May 2025. She believes that the Alliance's next chapter must be led with the same qualities that built it — lived expertise at the centre, governance integrity, and a clear focus on outcomes for consumers.

Ms Darwin was the founder of the Indigenous Australians Lived Experience Centre (IALEC). Her national roles have spanned the mental health and suicide prevention sectors, government and academia.

“My leadership is centred in my own lived experience of mental health challenges, suicide loss and suicide attempts. In May 2026 I survived a serious attempt to end my life. I am still here, even more committed to change, and I share this because it is directly relevant to this role,” said Ms Darwin.

“In my role as Interim Chairperson of the Alliance, I will bring experience and a deep commitment to hold governments to account in the next National Agreement, strengthen our federated model, develop viable alternatives to current failing systems, strengthen the peer workforce, advocate for consumer



human rights, and deepen our allyship with First Nations lived experience,” concluded Ms Darwin.

Support is available: Lifeline 13 11 14 | Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467 | 13YARN 13 92 76

Pictured below:

Leilani Darwin and Mathew Fagan



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