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MEDIA RELEASE: Australian Association of Peer Workers established today

The national peak body for people with mental health challenges – known as the Alliance – today announces the establishment of the Australian Association of Peer Workers, in partnership with the Indigenous Australian Lived Experience Centre (IALEC) and Mental Health Carers Australia (MHCA).

The Alliance warmly commends the Australian Government for delivering on its commitment in the 2024–25 Budget to provide one-off seed funding of \$4.345 million over three years to establish and initially operate the Association. This investment recognises the critical contribution of peer workers across mental health and suicide prevention services nationally.

The new Association will be a peer-worker led, democratic national body representing mental health, suicide prevention, family/carer/kin and First Nations peer workers. It will operate as an auspiced body under the Alliance for its initial establishment phase, supported through formal partnership with IALEC and MHCA.

CEO of the Alliance, Priscilla Brice, said:

“As a 100% peer-run organisation, the Alliance is proud to facilitate the establishment of this new Association in partnership with IALEC and Mental Health Carers Australia. We recognise the enormous responsibility entrusted to us by government and the peer workforce to get this right. This must be built carefully, collaboratively and with integrity so that peer workers themselves shape the foundations of their national professional organisation.”

Chair of the Alliance, Mathew Fagan, said:

“This Association will be led by peer workers, for peer workers. The Alliance’s role is to support, enable and steward its establishment. We will recruit peer workers to lead the organisation in its initial phase and take the time necessary to ensure strong governance, sound systems and long-term viability. Our goal is to build a democratic, member-driven Association that endures.”

CEO of IALEC, Vicki McKenna, said:

“Partnering with both the Alliance and Mental Health Carers Australia has been absolutely critical to elevating and truly representing lived-experience voices across mental health and suicide prevention. As the three national peak bodies, we’re committed to building a strong and enduring partnership, one grounded in respect, equal standing, and a shared voice that drives meaningful change.”

Chair of Mental Health Carers Australia, Professor Robert Bland AM, said:

“Mental Health Carers Australia is looking forward to working in partnership with the Alliance and IALEC to support the establishment of the new Association. The Association will provide an



Indigenous Australian
Lived Experience Centre

opportunity for the family and carer peer workforce to help shape the future of their profession, including training and career pathways”.

The Association will commence as an independent business unit within the Alliance and transition to a stand-alone entity once agreed co-designed sustainability indicators are met. Throughout this period, the focus will be on delivering practical outcomes for peer workers, establishing robust democratic governance arrangements, building strong relationships with state and territory peer groups, and embedding long-term financial sustainability.

The Association’s proposed initial work program will include:

- **National Training Plan** – aligning and strengthening education and training pathways for the peer workforce.
- **National Supervision and Quality Framework** – supporting supervision models, quality assurance, workforce wellbeing and psychosocial safety.
- **Career Pathway Resource** – developing nationally consistent guidance on roles, progression and career development.
- **National Workplace Standards** – promoting ethical, effective and safe employment of peer workers across service settings.
- **Peer Workforce Advocacy** – providing national advocacy on workforce issues and establishing an advice and referral line for peer workers and stakeholders.
- **First Nations Peer Workforce Development Strategy** – embedded across all work streams, supporting culturally safe, First Nations-led workforce development.

The Alliance expects the Association to be fully operational in the first quarter of the 26/27 financial year, with recruitment of peer worker leadership commencing during the establishment phase.

Peer workers, employers and sector stakeholders are encouraged to follow developments and participate in shaping this important national initiative.

A set of ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ is available at: <http://nmhca.org.au/peer-association-faq>.

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