

Introduction

In February 2020, the Queensland Government announced the establishment of a new mental health consumer representative peak (new peak) to represent Queenslanders who use public mental health services. It was intended the new peak would:

- provide policy advice and system advocacy representing the common interests of Queensland mental health consumers of all ages and backgrounds
- bring emerging issues to government for consideration
- empower — through training, mentoring and support — individual consumer representatives to provide personal perspectives and experiences on public mental health policy and planning issues.

The Commission was funded by the Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch, Queensland Health (MHAODB) to establish and temporarily auspice the new peak during the establishment phase, as recommended in consultation reports completed after the dissolution of Queensland Voice (the former Queensland consumer advocacy body).

Project governance

The Commission consulted sector lived experience experts and leaders before establishing the project's governance mechanisms to ensure the project was underpinned and informed by lived experience and had a transparent and accountable decision-making process.

In addition, two people with lived experience were recruited by the Commission to manage the project. The Commission committed to evaluating the establishment process to capture the unique opportunities and learnings from the new peak's formation.

A twelve-member project steering committee (PSC) was formed to oversee all milestones of the establishment phase until the board of the new peak was recruited. The PSC operated for 12 months, had six lived experience representatives, along with representatives from ARAFMI (Carers peak), Health Consumers Queensland, MHAODB, the Commission and National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF). It was co-chaired by the Commissioner and a lived experience representative who identified as a First Nations persons and an activist in the LGBTIQ+ community.

Operation of the new organisation

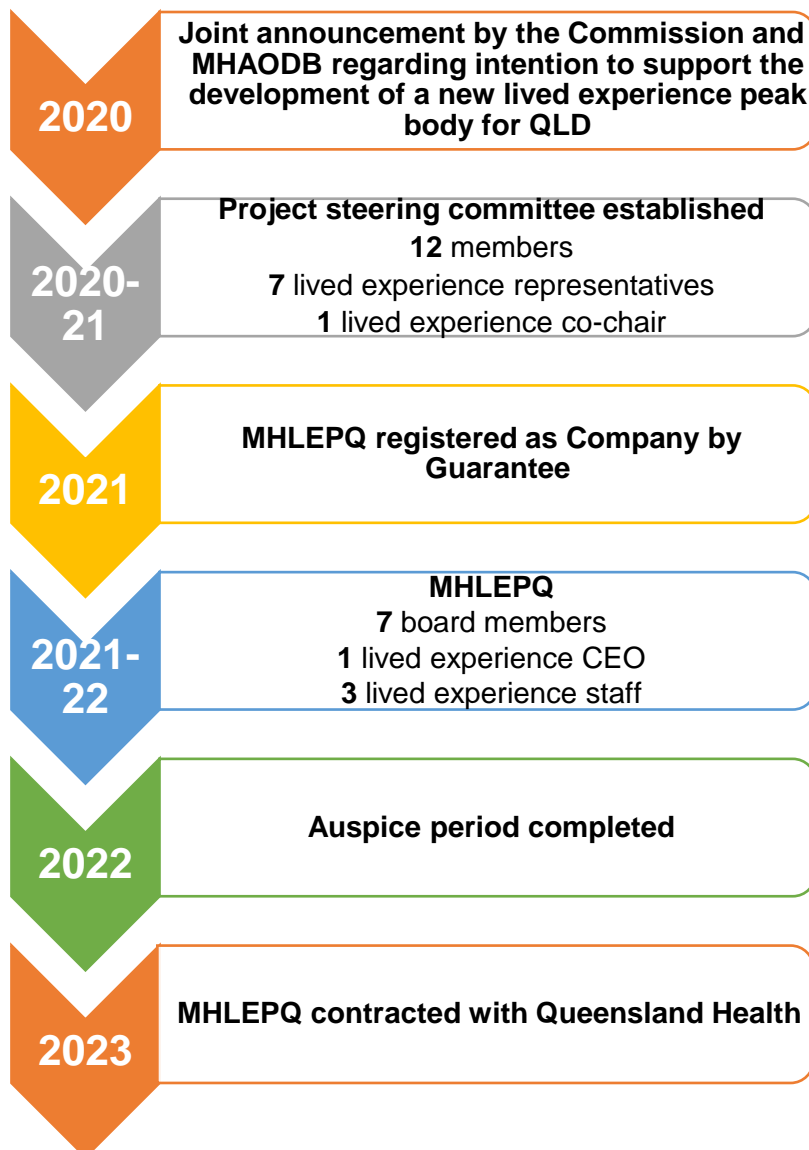
The Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland (MHLEPQ) was registered as an independent company with charitable status in July 2021. The Commission's auspicing role was extended for an additional six months to December 2022, to enable MHLEPQ's engagement in significant projects such as the Queensland Mental Health Select Committee Inquiry submission.

The MHLEPQ board has seven members, a majority of whom have a lived experience, a structure recommended by the PSC. An interim CEO was appointed in June 2021 and left in September 2021. A

second interim CEO was appointed in October 2021 following a targeted approach due to time pressures. The board has met monthly since July 2021 to work with the interim CEO to set up the governance and operational structure of the new organisation. The first lived experience advisory group (LEAG) was assembled in December 2021 to support the response to the Queensland Mental Health Select Committee Inquiry and three operational staff were recruited in July 2022.

In September 2022, the MHLEPQ was assessed by an independent auditor for its readiness to enter a standalone contract with Queensland Health. This assessment identified a number of areas relating to the organisation's governance, all of which have been addressed. As a result, the Commission's auspicing role concluded in December 2022 and the organisation entered into a direct contractual relationship with Queensland Health from 1 January 2023.

Figure 1: Project timeline



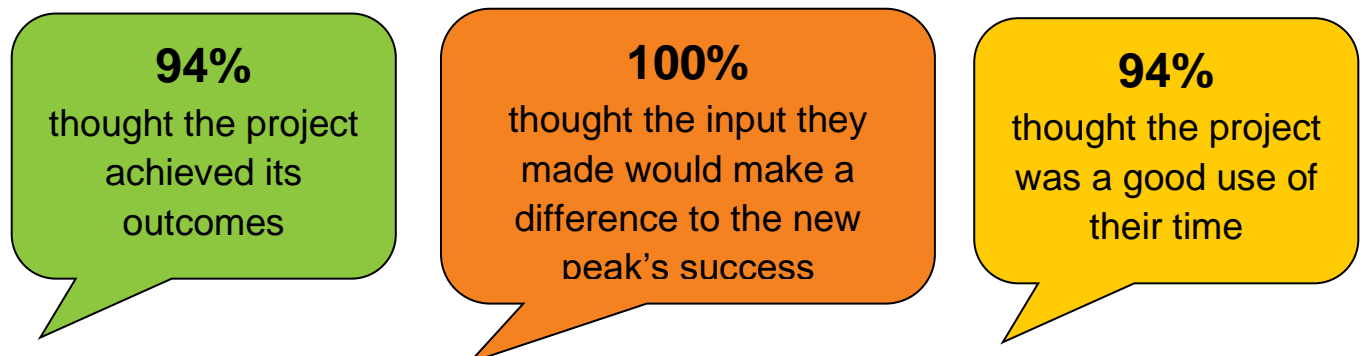
Project evaluation

Establishment phase

A survey and interviews were used to evaluate the establishment phases of the project. Interim findings indicated that the project was on track to reach its objectives. Eighteen people (n=18) participated in the establishment phase evaluation, of which 94% agreed the project would achieve its objectives and all (100%) survey respondents agreed that the input they had provided would make a difference to the success of the new peak. This level of confidence in the projects ability to succeed was echoed in the interviews with key stakeholders.

The evaluation of the auspicing component included interviews from 11 people engaged in this phase. Overall, the data suggested that the Commission was committed to working collaboratively with the MHLEPQ to effectively establish the organisational processes and structures. While this phase took longer than anticipated to implement, the MHLEPQ made the decision to customise the implementation of the auspicing plans, which aligned with the organisation's right to self-govern as a new, independent entity.

As with the establishment phase of the project, interviewees praised the Commission project team for providing high quality, compassionate project management and leadership.



The above statistics are based on 18 respondents.

Summary

In addition to the overall outcomes of the evaluation results, participants mostly reported overall satisfaction with their involvement in the project. Almost all (94%) survey respondents agreed the establishment project was a good use of their time.

Reflections on the project identified opportunities to strengthen how two entities could collaborate to better establish the new organisation as a functional representative voice for Queensland's mental health consumers.

