

for co-design and *working with* enthusiasts

# with us



ISSUE 3 • NOVEMBER 2022



# Big thanks...

Big thanks to the wonderful **Nina Sepahpour**  
for the cover artwork

 [nina-sepahpour.com](https://nina-sepahpour.com)  [@ninasepahpour](https://www.instagram.com/ninasepahpour)

Big thanks to **Ellen Muller**  
for her most excellent editing handiwork.

 [ellenmuller.com](https://ellenmuller.com)  [linkedin.com/in/ellen-muller](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ellen-muller)

High fives and huge thanks to all of the awesome contributors to Issue 3 of **with us**, and extra special virtual hugs to a very patient behind the scenes support crew who have provided moral support and gentle arse kicking to keep things on track. (you know who you are)



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of this nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the voice of lived experience, their families and support people; to those who use their personal experiences of ill health or circumstance in the hope of shaping a better future for themselves and others. We thank them for finding the extraordinary strength and determination it takes to revisit often painful memories in order to make a difference.

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# Editorial

Welcome to the **by people for people** issue of *with us*.

This time around, we've brought along a great little selection of top projects and people who've been very busy out there putting people with lived and living experience, their voices and perspectives right at the heart of their work.

As usual, we'll be skipping the glossy spin and getting straight to talking to those on the ground doing **working with** for real - because if there's one thing I keep hearing on my travels, it's that people want less buzzwords and jargon, more practicalities and people.



Working with and alongside people with lived and living experience – isn't just a nice to have, or a box to tick. It's the way to build products and services that work. It's a mandated requirement and expectation across many sectors and settings and should be seen as core to business and success.

We know better outcomes are achieved when we work in partnership with those who will be impacted. What underpins these ways of working is the simple human rights based assumption that people are experts in their lives and should have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that shape their lives.

In my consulting work, I love getting to meet and work with organisations, executives, and teams who genuinely get the value of **working with** and really want to do it well.

I think we all know that there's still lots of work to be done to get to a place where great practice is the norm. But I am seeing a growing commitment to moving away from transactional, one sided ways of working, towards approaches that are inclusive and prioritise connection.

More teams connecting with each other and the communities they serve can only lead to more voices being included, more tables worth sitting at, and meaningful benefits for all.

The other thing I'm loving is the growing pockets of great practitioners from many disciplines and sectors who are seeking **community over competition**. Lots of top people working in different ways (and places) to find and foster opportunities to include and partner with people with lived experience – **looking to support each others' efforts and be part of a collective change**.

I've met lots of fantastic teams, services, leaders and organisations across sectors, settings and disciplines who are stepping up... looking to do better.

Alongside them are advocates, lived experience leaders and representatives (established as well as newer voices). It's not easy to put aside past tokenistic (in some cases even retraumatizing) experiences in the hope that this time might be different. Or to speak up for the first time about your experience in the hope that it might make things better in the future for someone else.

So many different perspectives and ways of working – many voices collectively knowing and willing to trust that

**"The magic is in the mess." – Brene Brown**

Which brings me back to **with us...**

I believe that it's by shining a light on both the magic and the mess, that we all grow and improve together.

A big thanks to Kirra, Tianne and Ben, Nina and the Social Impact crew - the real-life **working with** champions who have so kindly shared their by people for people projects with us in this issue.

Who, in the spirit of us all learning and growing together, have been generous enough to let us all peek through the windows into their various projects and see great work happening in practical terms.

Sharing our stories brings this work into the light (where it belongs).

**I hope that you enjoy Issue #3 of with us.**

Maybe you might file these stories away to remind you to keep going on the days when advocating for this work to be done well feels like an uphill battle.

They may help you start thinking about the possibilities for **working with** or levelling up in your own situation or setting.

Or perhaps they will give you a little bit of extra insight into the thought and care that goes into doing this work well.

Whichever it is, I hope that you recognise the sweet smell of possibility in the stories and insights shared and that you use them to inspire and inform your own **working with** adventures.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue". The script is cursive and elegant, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping tail on the "e".

P.S. We are always looking for examples of great work to celebrate in our free zine. If you know of or have been part of a great 'by people for people' project that did a great job - we would love to hear about it. [Tell us about a project here.](#)



## **“Connection**

**The energy that exists between people when they feels seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.”**

**- Brene Brown**

# The story of Unbroken

**A toolkit for life after sexual assault**



# Unbroken

A TOOLKIT FOR LIFE  
AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT

# The story of Unbroken

## A toolkit for life after sexual assault



Meet the wonderful Kirra, she is an emerging young activist, a Youth Focused Peer Support Worker and a Lived Experience Consultant with Berry Street's Y-Change Team.

Kirra first started with Y-Change as a lived experience consultant when she was 17 - and at 22 she is now deeply a part of Berry Street's work.

Over this time Kirra has grown her confidence and skills as a facilitator and speaker, and she is particularly keen to apply her investigative mind to finding ways to ensure that systems, policy, and laws keep people safe from sexual abuse, perpetrators and violence. She also has an interest in addressing the absence of children and young people in the family violence narrative.

In late 2021, Kirra spoke to us about phase one of her 'Unbroken' video series. A collection of interviews made with survivors of sexual assault, which she has been working on since 2019.



*The following is a transcript of our conversation about the project.*

**It started like so many good things - lots of ideas, textas and butcher's paper**

## **'Unbroken' started with being frustrated and angry about a problem - armed with textas and butcher's paper we wanted to be seen and heard.**

This project started in 2019 with me just being really frustrated. I was angry and I was venting to Lauren Oliver, the previous senior manager for youth engagement at Berry Street, about the lack of support for survivors of sexual assault.

I felt like we were (still are) in this real crisis, and everyone was just accepting that this is the way it is instead of actually doing something about it.

She gave me some butcher's paper and a pink texta (my favourite colour), and together we asked 'what should be done about this?'. By the end of it, I had pages of butcher's papers all stuck up on the walls of the Berry Street office.

### **I wrote out my big dream - 10 things ... and then I picked one**

Full on, but yeah I had this whole 10-step plan about how I was going to try and fix the world. There were 10 massive phases about what I could do to support survivors of sexual assault.

Lauren was like, this is great but what if you could just pick one thing? Where would you want to start? And for me, the most important thing was being able to connect with other people who've been through what I've been through.

I can only talk from my own experience and I want to hear, learn and work with other survivors of sexual assault; especially different generations because I'm young. I really wanted to understand from all different perspectives.

### **Break through! So it started there**

From here, Lauren knew of some funding with the Victorian Women's Trust so we applied and got it which was really exciting. Berry Street also funds Y-Change and partners in Unbroken.

### **Time to name and design the project**

As we started on the project and the design work, I was also trying to think of a name which took ages because I knew it had to feel right.

I decided on 'Unbroken' when the guy I was seeing at the time said that I was a 'broken little girl. His words really got to me, but I thought, I'm not broken! I may feel broken sometimes, I may struggle and fall apart but that's okay.

Yes I'm human and I still experience all the emotions, but I think that's why it was really important to reclaim the idea of breaking.

Our design is the lotus flower - a symbol of wisdom, resilience, rebirth, and strength.

### **Significance and meaning of lotus flower = powerful and beautiful**

A lotus will grow in a swamp. They grow in really dark places (swamps), and despite that they change and develop until they blossom into a beautiful flower. For me, they are the perfect example of being separate from your environment. Like the lotus, you can grow in spite of darkness into something beautiful and strong - I even have a lotus flower tattooed on my foot as a reminder of the inner strength it takes to grow.

### **So 'Unbroken' came from frustration, to an idea, to funding, to getting started**

Supported by staff at Berry Street from the outset; this was how our project became a reality.

### **One - Connected with seven survivors across Victoria**

I created a type form to connect with other people and see who was interested in being a part of the project. I then connected by phone with everyone who expressed interest - which was a huge stretch out of my comfort zone as I hate doing phone calls.

Through these calls, participants could get a bit more of a feel about the project, about me and about the other people who would be working on it. It was also an opportunity to talk through fears, barriers and prospective risks of being involved before they decided if they would like to be a part of Unbroken.



## **Two - Building relationships**

- ***First we did a getting to know you session*** - meeting people where they were at

There's seven survivors that we've connected with, and we drove all around Victoria, meeting them wherever they felt comfortable. We'd have lunch together, we get to know them, they get to know us and we started building trust. Those long car drives involved listening to a lot of Taylor Swift.

- ***We kept it going via emails, texts and checking in***

We made sure we were just checking in and had that regular connection, which was important especially during COVID. We'd also send through resources like safety plans, self-care, posters, articles, and support numbers.

- ***Pre-briefs before filming***

On the actual filming day, we did pre briefs. We would have conversations about the questions that we were going to ask, to make sure they were okay with what we'd be asking. We went through things like their favourite foods for snacks on the day, what is a no-go zone? What do you want to talk about?

## **Three - Filming sessions**

Lift Productions have been wonderful with the actual filming sessions. They have been so generous with their time and contribution. They were supportive of our process which involved a lot of stopping and starting to ensure it was the right time, and led by survivors.

### **Paying survivors has been our top priority**

Paying participants for all the time they were involved with the project was always our first priority with the budget we had.

When I first got \$10,000 for the project, I was like, 'Oh my, that's so much money! We can do so much work'. But the reality is, it's not a huge amount of money and it has to stretch.

As well as the cost of the filming, editing and the lunches, we also made self-care bags for everyone. A little bag of things to remind them to take care of themselves and say thanks; like, candles, stickers, colouring books and a journal. These were given on filming day.



#### **Four - After the filming**

Following filming, we did the debrief, and we would meet participants for lunch. Sometimes this was in a park or their house... wherever/whatever they wanted to do. Sometimes we didn't even talk about anything to do with the project - just had fun talking about friends or pets, whatever, really.

“And then we catch up with them afterwards to continue that relationship. So the most important thing for me is I didn't want it to be an extractive process where we go in there, we extract something from them, but rather it's an ongoing relationship. And it's like, both of us. It's me giving a part of myself to them, and them doing the same thing as well, it's that relationship, which is really important. Reciprocity, versus the recipe.”

#### **Each person had control over their own video**

We worked with them to decide what they wanted to talk about and where they wanted to shoot their video. It was really important to us that each participant felt completely in control of what they talked about and how they talked about it, rather than it being an impersonal, business-like process.

#### **What we made together. The videos and the process of building strong connections.**

In the videos, some people chose to talk about mental ill health and how it intersects with sexual abuse. Some have spoken about the justice system and their experiences through that. Some also feature advocacy points where they think the justice system and services can also do better.

People talked about family and community support, how important that's been for them and also how people can do better. They spoke of what not to say to survivors in our communities.

We've filmed three (videos) so far, and they're not online yet. The editing phase is really in depth because we want to make sure that we're not putting misinformation out there. We want to ensure that we're putting out what the survivors want, but we're not doing any harm in the process.

***I think it's as much about the process that we all went through as it is about the final videos - connecting with each other on a deeper level and doing that kind of peer support as well.***

I've gotten so much out of the process myself and what I've heard from the other people involved is that they got something out of their experience too. Some have even gone on to do more in the community and to support others.

This has been really, really beautiful because Y- Change has created a safe supportive community and we're trying to spread that out beyond the organisation and trying to bring other young people with lived experience along.

***I believe that when the videos get released***, it will challenge how the public views survivors. For survivors, shame is often internalised. Hopefully these shared personal experiences will not only help other survivors come forward and say this is what happened to me, but help people better support those who do come forward.

“ I guess with the videos I really wanted to create space for each survivor to talk about their experiences in the way that they wanted to talk about them. So some people really wanted to focus on support, some people really wanted to focus on the aftermath. It's mainly about the impacts, we didn't ask anyone to share their personal story and what happened but we had that space if that's what people wanted to share.”

“There shouldn't be any shame in sharing your story. I think a lot of the time when people do [share], others don't know how to respond because sexual assault and abuse is not openly talked about. We wanted to create a space where it's okay and feels safe to do that because there are people in your community that are there with you and supporting you through that as well.”

### **A bit about the why**

Why I started this project is just a deep level of understanding and care. When you fall through the gaps of the system yourself, you understand the consequences of what happens if we don't start filling up those gaps.

**“I really want to start a public conversation that's led by survivors because it can't keep going on like this. Things need to change and something needs to give. People like Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins have made people sit up and listen and with Unbroken we can keep that conversation going and keep it led by survivors, which is really important as well.”**

It's important to note that (the videos) are not people who haven't experienced it talking about it. It's led by survivors, and it's really capped at what we want to say as well.

### **Lived-experience led matters**

There's just the care, and a sense of safety within the whole process which we prioritise, rather than an afterthought we tack on at the end. As survivors, caring for ourselves is also really important, and our experiences can be a useful model for those we're working with.

What made the difference throughout this project is we spent time building relationships; we didn't just go in there and say hey, we're filming today without any of that pre-work. We started this project at the end of 2019, so it's not something that we rushed into or took lightly - we understood what we wanted the process to be, and informed consent was at the front of our minds at every single step of the way. Transparency was also a vital component, and we were really upfront with everyone about what we were doing and why we're doing it - as well as asking what they wanted from this process.

I think it's more informed when it's lived-experience led. That is not to say that lived experience is better than other forms of expertise, but it's different and you are able to connect with someone on a deeper level when you've been through a similar experience. Working alongside people who have that professional expertise as well as a lived experience is a chance to really get the work done and do it right, and I don't think that this process would have been like that at all if it wasn't led by lived experience.

### **How we set the project up for success**

We put so much work and thought into the preparation, set up and planning. For instance, the way that we formulated each question - we went through them asking, how would we feel being asked that?

There's also a lot of pre-work with each survivor, showing them the questions and if they're uncomfortable, asking how we can frame it differently? Language preferences are also important to specify, as some people with lived experience hate the term survivor, whereas some people hate the term 'victim'. So just really understanding what language makes them feel most comfortable as well.

### **Challenges**

Finding more funding and knowing the pathways to getting it for the next phase in the project has been a challenge.

### **What I'm most proud of**

I think what I'm most proud of is the people that I've been working with. It's not an easy task to do, to speak about your experiences - it can bring up a lot for people, and to do that in a public space takes a lot of strength. I'm just really proud of each and every person that I've done the work with. The best bits have been the road trips and going out and doing our little lunches that we had with everyone. Just being with each other and sitting or going for walks together, sitting in the park, meeting people's animals, getting to know each person for who they are and just spending time with them, I think that was and still is the best part of all the work that I do.

It's been such a healing process for me. I've learnt so much. It's changed the way I've thought about things. It's helped me understand just how different our experiences are, but also the similarities between us. I'm hopeful of giving people a better understanding of the long term impacts in the aftermath of sexual assault, because it's not something that stops after we experience it. It's a lifelong thing that we have to live with; we have to live with the impacts and we have to survive through and learn how to manage and cope afterwards. Hearing the way each person has done that was so amazing and so special.

It hasn't always been pretty – I wouldn't want to paint that picture. No, it's been really hard, and a lot of us are still living through it. We can never assume where people are at in their healing, it's not always linear and doesn't always have an end. Everyone deserves support at every step of the way and having conversations like this brings people together. We're still managing and coping and trying our best and that's what matters.

### **Where's it at now**

So there's going to be seven individual videos and we've done three so far. I've found the editing process hard because I want to keep all of it. I don't want to get rid of anything, especially something that turns out to be a critical thing.

There's going to be one (overarching) film which takes snippets from all of them and brings everything together. We'll have snapshots of each video on Instagram and behind the scenes content as well. Like quick shots of information, then you can go and find out more. We want it to be really accessible,

From this, I'm really hoping for a couple of things. One is to make sure that the people who we've partnered with feel in control of their stories, and feel like it's something that they're really proud of. I've talked to people who are planning on sharing their video on their Instagram, which makes me proud.

We have a call to action as well with the state government to boost funding for support services, and a commitment to stop this health crisis and do more. This is especially important for children and young people – which is where I sit – as 44% of sexual assault survivors are aged under 15. I was 14 at the time, and at that age, we're unable to process what's happened to us. We need to be doing more for our children and young people as well as working with survivors of sexual assault on the best way that can look.

Hopefully, after we release the videos we can get more funding for phase two and phase three. Phase two would be going to the Victoria Police, the justice system, the court system, Legal Aid and exploring the barriers survivors have raised. As you can see, there's a lot more that I want to do with Unbroken as well, but yeah, that's the next step.

*You can find out more about Y-change here:*



[www.berrystreet.org.au](http://www.berrystreet.org.au)

# The Your Voice Project

## Young people advocating for systemic change

Yourtown provides services for young people, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing, long-term unemployment, prevention of youth suicide, child protection – as well as support for those experiencing domestic and family violence.

Ultimately, yourtown is all about taking the time to listen, understand and encourage young people to find their place.

The **Your Voice** project is an extension of this commitment; handing the mic to young people aged 15-24 to have their say on government, mental health, education, employment and more.

This project involved a national survey, national forum, and youth summit. Then its Youth Ambassadors assisted with presenting the findings to the Federal Government.

We spoke to Tianna Stevens on their experience as part of the steering committee to represent young people. Particularly, her role representing and advocating for those, like Stevens, who are LGBTQIA+, and have lived experience of mental health and poverty. and Ben the Youth Advocacy Project Co-ordinator in yourtown's Advocacy and Research team, who were both part of this project. Here's what they had to say.



**Tell us the story of Your Voice.**

**Ben: Your Voice** was a co-designed project to develop recommendations to the federal government about issues that are important for those aged 15–24. We explored young people’s experiences with services, areas of concern, and their ideas for change. It included a survey, forums and an online summit.

The advisors and I met regularly throughout the project, to discuss next steps, analyse information and discuss the approaches that we would use. They helped develop safe, accessible activities for the project, including, the questions, activities, SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats) analysis and idea mapping. The reference group provided information on major decisions and drafts for feedback to ensure we were staying true to their voices.

**“From the survey 77.5% wanted action on mental health, with availability, accessibility and affordability highlighted as key issues. The other key areas were Education, Employment, Environment and the Cost of Living. When analysed, the responses identified connections between mental health and the need to act on other key issues to positively influence on mental health.”**

Another issue was safety. We heard from many young people that services are not always suitable, particularly for those who are culturally diverse, have disabilities or identify as LGBTIQ+. So, while many young people said that services were inaccessible, this wasn't just about transport or geography, it was about language, attitudes and how information was communicated.

Originally, we planned to have face to face consultations, and send three ambassadors to Canberra, but COVID lockdowns changed all of that. Using a mix of Hum Hub, Zoom and Miro, we held online consultations that explored and built their ideas. We then developed a written and video report, with the advisors and reference group taking on the role of the ambassadors. The report, which includes seven recommendations, has since been delivered to the Minister and the department.

### **What did you achieve together?**

**Tianna:** I think that the experts and experienced adults involved were really influenced and impacted by the young people's responses. I think together we have shown intergenerational collaboration and trust. If we keep doing things like this then we can make systems that work for everyone.

**Ben:** Young people told us that we gave them an opportunity to really talk about the issues, be heard and play an important role. I think this built their confidence to have their say and helped them realise that there are adults who will listen and others who share their views.

### **What was the 'why' that sat at the heart of the project?**

**Tianna:** For myself it was an opportunity to have my voice heard by people who seemed unreachable. My 'why' was to make sure that what was said was heard by just one Federal politician. Those of us heavily invested in the project were very protective of it maintaining its integrity and heart.

The opportunity to get young people's voices in front of decision makers is the whole point of projects like these – if we can influence and shape decisions concerning our own lives then we have achieved something.

The opportunity to get young people's voices in front of decision makers is the whole point of projects like these – if we can influence and shape decisions concerning our own lives then we have achieved something.



### **What were the highlights from your perspective?**

**Tianna:** For myself, the whole project was a highlight and I really loved hearing other young people's voices. I was very humbled and honoured that what I had to say was valued.

**Ben:** For me, it was young people realising how knowledgeable and insightful they can be. You could see young people change from being unsure to knowing that they had good ideas that were worth expressing.

### **Is there anything that you would do differently next time?**

**Ben:** I would get the advisory together earlier to ensure that we have as much involvement from them as possible. We now have that group available and we will involve them to increase the pool of Youth Advisors and the voices that are informing projects.

**Tianna:** There were so many smart, articulate young people involved and I was really proud of them. I would love to see them stand in front of politicians and let their voices ring loud and clear.

I think we've learnt lessons on how we can do things better next time. We now have a deeper understanding of different approaches and how to deal with frustrations.

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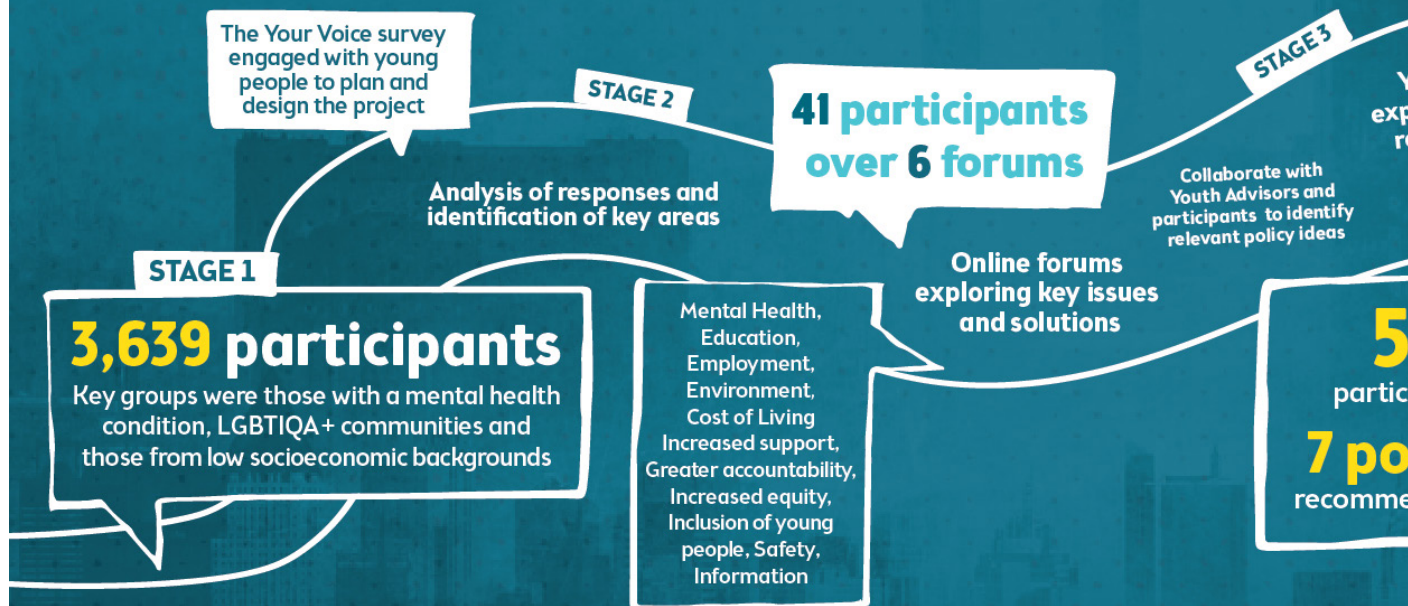
### **What's next for Your Voice?**

**Ben:** It will continue to inform our work at yourtown, including our advocacy, youth participation and program development.

Young people are keen for us to run the project again and we are exploring how we can use future versions to involve young people in advocating for systemic change.



# HERE'S HOW IT WORKED



# YOUR VOICE

## STAGE 4

Youth summit to  
explore and prioritise  
recommendations

**3** Youth Ambassadors assisted  
with presenting the findings of the  
project to the Federal Government.

### Benefits:

improved health and wellbeing, increased  
independence and trust, feeling onnected  
and able to access support, being ready for  
employment and that the environment will  
be protected.

**3**  
Participants  
Policy  
Recommendations

You can read more about Your Voice here:



[www.yourtown.com.au/yourvoice](http://www.yourtown.com.au/yourvoice)

# Collaborative artwork at The Social Studio

## imagining the future together

We spoke to textile designer and illustrator Nina Sepahpour , about her experience running one of The Social Studio's recent creative collaborative projects; a partnered initiative with VicHealth which aimed to foster a healthier future through creativity.

Part educator, part retailer and part production house, The Social Studio is a not-for-profit using fashion and creativity to create work and learning opportunities for Melbourne's refugee and new migrant communities.

Launched in 2009, The Social Studio began as a group of Melbourne community members, local designers and fashion industry professionals, joined together by a common idea: to embrace up-cycled fashion as a vehicle for social change and uplift youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

From launching its storefront on Smith Street, The Social Studio has continued to grow, with their ethical and sustainable business model providing education and employment opportunities for more than 780 youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds over the last decade.





**Who was involved?**

This project involved The Social Studio and their fashion students, in partnership with VicHealth and their Future Healthy Program.

**What was the plan? What were you hoping to do together?**

The plan was to explore the key themes of social connection, physical activity and access to healthy food through illustration and print design. We worked together to produce a collaborative artwork to be screen printed onto tote bags, that were then handed out to the wider community via the Future Healthy Program.



### **How did that roll out in real life?**

Over four weeks, myself and The Social Studio's creative projects / retail manager Bonnie Mooney facilitated illustration workshops with students enrolled in their fashion school.

We started off by having big group conversations around what a healthy future looks like to us and what barriers are faced, brainstorming and mind-mapping our ideas. Each week we introduced different mediums, and explored expressing our feelings and aspirations through colour, collage and mark making.

Bonnie and I then scanned all of the illustrations that we created together, and digitally combined these into one image that was then screen printed onto tote bags that were produced in their Collingwood workshop.

### **What did it feel like to be part of it?**

This experience was incredibly special and valuable. It was great to see the student's harness their own creative style and work through the process of creating a collaborative artwork that spoke of their shared ideas.

This experience was incredibly special and valuable. It was great to see the student's harness their own creative style and work through the process of creating a collaborative artwork that spoke of their shared ideas.

It was an open and supportive space to share our different lived experiences, have meaningful conversations and play!

### **Were there any unexpected things that came out of it for you all?**

I feel like it was a great social space to connect, where everyone was really supportive of each other and able to talk freely about their experiences and what we missed living through lockdowns in Melbourne. Developing more of an understanding more about the spaces and experiences that we don't always have access to.



### **What was the end result?**

We created a print ready artwork that was then screen printed onto tote bags.

### **What's next? Are there any plans to do more work together?**

I've been involved with The Social Studio for many years now through markets and stocking my work in their retail space.

I'm excited to be working with them again later this month to facilitate some tile painting workshops as a part of their Cross-Stitch project. This project aims to highlight the contemporary value of traditional hand making skills across cultures and traditions, bringing artists and participants together to share knowledge and stories.



*You can read more about Nina and The Social Studio here:*



[www.thesocialstudio.org](http://www.thesocialstudio.org)

[www.futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au)

[www.ninasepahpour.com](http://www.ninasepahpour.com)



[@thesocialstudio](https://www.instagram.com/thesocialstudio)

[@futurehealthy](https://www.instagram.com/futurehealthy)

[@ninasepahpour](https://www.instagram.com/ninasepahpour)

*Article images provided by The Social Studio*



**The Social Studio began as a group of Melbourne community members, local designers and fashion industry professionals, joined together by a common idea: to embrace up-cycled fashion as a vehicle for social change and uplift youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds.**

# The state of *working with* 2021

We asked people what it was really like to be part of lived experience engagement projects (aka ***working with***).

Take a look at what we heard in the first survey and [tell us how you found it in 2022](#).

## Who we spoke to

### People



We spoke to 42 people from a range of ages and stages

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## Good news stories

### People told us...

- 1 People with lived and living experience are being included.
  - 2 In some pockets, people are feeling heard and welcome
  - 3 People are getting paid or recognised for their contribution, and 91% felt that they were paid fairly.
  - 4 The majority of ***working with*** activities were described as co-design and consultation.
  - 5 Two thirds of people stated that they were involved early on in the process (project wise).
-

# snapshot

## Places



From across Australia. Mostly regional and metropolitan locations.

We're keen to hear some more from people who live in rural and remote areas in our 2022 survey.

## Experiences



The majority of whom are taking part in activities in the mental health, health, and community and social services.

We'd love to hear more about what's happening in other sectors and settings too.

## Opportunities to level up



There's room to improve literacy around what great '**working with**' practice (aka meaningful lived experience engagement) looks like in real life practical terms.

There are gaps between people knowing they should be using 'co' words and knowing what these words mean in real life action.



Talk to each other. We need to do better at closing the loop.

People told us they did not commonly know what was done with their contribution.



Move beyond the project level. Get better at involving people at all levels and stages.

People said they are mostly involved in co-design and consultation. Not so many at systemic governance levels.

## Let's keep talking...

**Take the  
2022 survey**

Let's see what's changed (or hasn't)



We hope you can use this snapshot to start conversations in your organisations, teams and networks about opportunities to level up.

# The *with us* Thumbs Up

Tools, resources and contemporary practice that get the ***with us*** thumbs up.

## 1. Tackling stigma - Images Matter

“The way we communicate about mental ill-health, suicide and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) can have either a positive or negative impact on a person’s life. The images we use in that communication are also important.”  
Check out the recently launched Images Matter - [Mindframe guidelines for image use](#).

## 2. The (hopeful) future of how governments communicate with the public

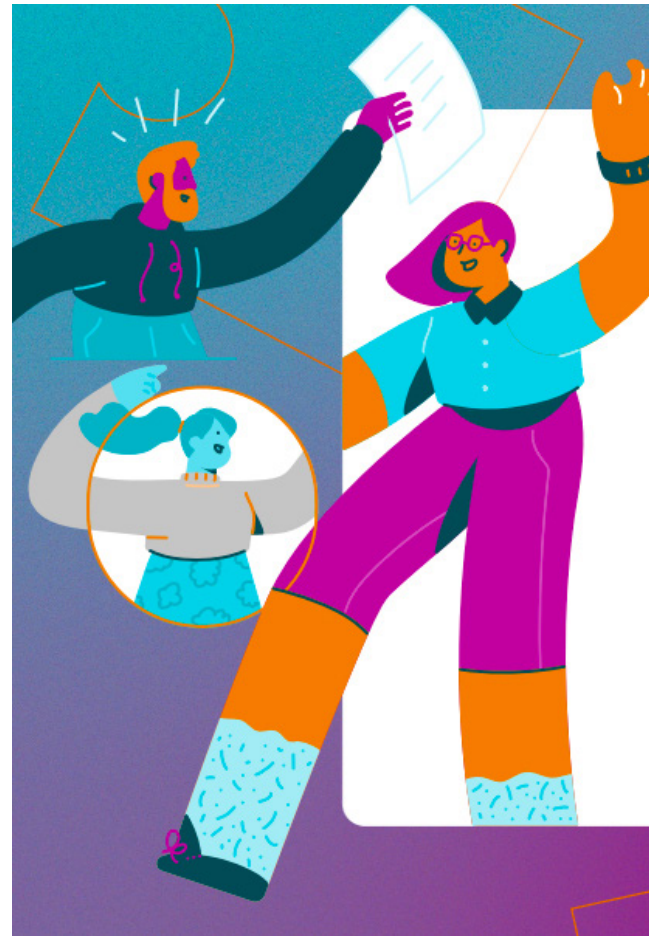
This recent article about New Zealand’s plans to banish jargon made my heart happy.  
The new law demands bureaucrats use simple, comprehensible language to communicate with the public. Hint hint Australian Government.

You can have a read [here](#)

## 3. Reflective resource

Together, LELAN (the Lived Experience Leadership & Advocacy Network) and TACSI (The Australian Centre for Social Innovation) have created a reflective resource designed for people looking to understand how ready, willing and able they are to embark on an authentic co-design process.

You can read more about it and download a copy [here](#)



## 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



## Thanks for joining us for Issue 3 of *with us*.

We hope that you found some inspiration and gems to inform your ***working with*** adventures.

### **Coming up next time**

Join us for Issue #4 , for more great examples of people-powered projects.

*Subscribe here* to be first to know when Issue 4 lands.



Made with love and hope for the future of ***working with.***

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