Contact

Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS)
La Trobe University
Building NR6
Bundoora VIC 3086, Australia
General enquiries
T +61 3 9479 8700
E arcshs@latrobe.edu.au
latrobe.edu.au/arcshs

Call for Expressions of Interest

Two Peer, Lived-Living Leadership PhD Scholarships

Meaningful involvement and leadership of people with peer, lived-living experience (PLLE) of marginalisation can transform health and social services by embedding equity, improving service relevance, and fostering systemic change. Contemporary health policies and workforce development strategies prioritise PLLE programs and leadership, with escalating investment in the past five years. Yet, the required community and sector knowledge to strengthen these PLLE program investments remain fragmented and siloed across diverse communities. The National Health and Medical Research Council have recently recognised this by funding the ***PiLLARS Project: Peer, Lived-Living Expertise Alliance for Research Strength Solidarity***. PiLLARS aims to strengthen the PLLE sector by deepening understanding across drug and alcohol, mental health, HIV, hepatitis B and C, sex work, and LGBTIQ+ communities. This knowledge will inform and develop the development of evidence-based policy, workforce and practice resources to improve health equity and wellbeing outcomes.

We are seeking two PhD students with PLLE in one or more of the above areas.

We also encourage applicants who have experience working or volunteering within organisations who provide PLLE services or advocacy.

The Chief Investigator team will mentor both PhD candidates to carry out data collection, co-author study outputs and extend analyses across intersecting PLLE sectors.

PiLLARS Project objectives are to:

1. Analyse the policies and frameworks that support PLLE programs across Australia.
2. Document the experiences, strengths and challenges of implementing PLLE programs.
3. Map the community, health and policy systems that influence PLLE effectiveness.
4. Develop a cross-sector PLLE model, workforce resources and implementation guidance to strengthen practice, policy and outcomes.

Applicants should ideally have a background in sociology, psychology, public health, health promotion, gender studies, policy or a related field. Experience in qualitative research and an interest in issues related to public policy, mental health, LGBTIQ+ health and the health of people who use criminalised drugs and wellbeing are highly desirable. Successful candidates will have the opportunity to work with a world-leading team of experts in mental health, AOD use, LGBTIQ+ health and key sector-leading industry partners. The successful candidates will be embedded within the broader project, however, will undertake original research as part of their PhD to complement the PiLLARS project.

Scholarship 1: This VMIAC Scholarship is expected to commence by July 2027 and will have an emphasis on mental health, including intersections with other areas of PLLE. Possible areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- Access to PLLE mental health services in rural or regional areas (or specific states and territories).
- The role of PLLE leadership in mental health programs in community organisations.
- Interactions and intersections between PLLE in mental health and peer work in other areas of the PiLLARS partnership

Scholarship 2: This La Trobe University funded scholarship is expected to commence by July 2027 and will have an emphasis on PLLE models and their influence in community or policy systems. Possible areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- The role of PLLE models, leadership and advocacy in community or peer led organisations.
- Models of PLLE workforce development and supervision across diverse sectors.
- Comparisons of the role and influence of PLLE organisations or services within health, community and political systems.
- Policy framework characteristics that enable or disenable the role and influence of peer led community services within health and community systems.

Successful candidates will:

- Be based at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University, Bundoora, with the possibility of placement in a PiLLARS partner organisation.
- Receive a stipend of $36,800 per annum (2027 full-time rate) for 3.5 years, a tuition fee scholarship for four years, and allowances.
- Participate in project meetings, workshops and other activities relevant to their PhD focus.

The successful applicants will be supervised by one or more researchers from PiLLARS Project, including Professor Graham Brown (Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society) and Dr Tessa Zirnsak (School of Social Work and Social Policy) at La Trobe University. Supervisors can also include investigators from our partner PLLE organisations.

More information about the project can be found here.

Expressions of interest

To apply, please submit the following:

- A CV or resumé with referees, including a referee from any community or peer organisations you may have been involved with, and a list of any publications of which you have been an author or co-author;
- A cover letter outlining which of the two scholarships you are interested (Scholarship 1, Scholarship 2, or both), your research experience, research interests, as well as either a) how you believe you would contribute to the PiLLARS project, or b) a one paragraph description of a research topic you would like to pursue.

Send Expressions of Interest to Emily at E.lenton@latrobe.edu.au by 29 January 2027

The PiLLARS PhD scholarships are only available for Australian residents and citizens. We are unable to accept international applications.

- More information on Scholarship 1 can be found here.
- More information on Scholarship 2 can be found here.

Timeline

- 29 January 2027: Expressions of interest due
- Mid-February 2027: Review and shortlisting
- February 2027: Interview shortlist
- March 2027: Preferred candidates invited to submit full PhD enrolment application
- July 2027: Scholarships to commence