

# Lifeline Australia Lived Experience Framework

Summary

Version 1.0 | July 2025



# Acknowledgment of Country

We, Lifeline Australia, acknowledge the Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Custodians of Country on which our national office in Sydney is based, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

We extend our respect to all Traditional Custodians throughout Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and across our national Lifeline network.

We pay our respect to Elders, Past, Present and Future, acknowledging their continued connection and caretaking for Country, Lands, Seas, Waters, Animals and Vegetation, for thousands of generations.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' sovereignty of this country was never ceded.

Wherever you are located today, it always was and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.



# Recognition of Lived Experience

Lifeline pays deep respect to people who have personal experiences of crisis and suicide.

They are the reason our organisation and services exist. We recognise the value that their experience and expertise brings to our work to ensure no one faces their toughest moments alone.



# Acknowledgement to contributors

**The Lived Experience Framework has been defined through a co-development approach.**

Lifeline acknowledges the contributions of:

- People with lived experience including:
  - Members of the Lifeline Australia and Lifeline Direct Lived Experience Advisory Groups.
  - Former members of the DV-Alert and 13YARN Advisory Groups.
  - Ambassadors and storytellers.
  - People involved in user testing and research.
- Lifeline staff across the organisation – ranging from CEOs, executive, advisory group coordinators, and service design and delivery.
- Members across the Lifeline Network.
- Mental health and suicide prevention sector representatives, who provided insights on their organisations' approaches.

We also thank Nous Group for their close attention to ensuring all voices were heard and reflected in the framework and independent lived experience expert advisor Carrie Lumby who has provided insightful guidance throughout.

This is the first version of the Framework and represents a starting point. Lifeline looks forward to continuing to iterate the Framework to ensure it supports us to value lived experience perspectives and expertise across our activities.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

### LIFELINE NETWORK (LIFELINE)

The whole Lifeline federation, including Lifeline Australia (LLA), Lifeline Direct (LLD) and Members.

### PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

People with lived or living experience of personal crisis or suicide, emotional distress or domestic and family violence (DFV).

Lived experience of suicide is defined as having experience/d suicidal thoughts, survived a suicide attempt, supported a loved one through suicidal crisis, or been bereaved by suicide.

This includes people that have used Lifeline's services to seek support who may or may not identify as having lived experience.

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# Context



## Lifeline recognises the immense value the involvement of people with lived experience brings to our organisation and the work we do.

For more than 60 years, Lifeline Australia has been a leading player in advocating for an Australia free of suicide. We are proud to create and deliver services that provide support for those experiencing crisis or their supporters, so that no person in Australia must face their toughest moments alone.

We are committed to bringing in and incorporating the voices of people with lived experience to enhance outcomes for people seeking our services. The co-development of a Lived Experience Framework is an important step to document this commitment and ensuring all involved have a consistently positive experience across a range of engagement mechanisms available.

### Why a Lived Experience Framework

We currently engage people with lived experience across storytelling, our Lived Experience Advisory Groups, and user testing and research with specific groups for service design and improvement.

The Lived Experience Framework will help us engage with people with lived experience in the best way possible by providing greater clarity and supporting a positive experience for all involved.

It builds on what we are already doing and is centred on improving outcomes for the people we serve. It outlines our approach to lived experience engagement for all current groups, and any new groups moving forward.



# Lifeline Australia is passionate about bringing in voices of people with lived experience to enhance outcomes for people seeking our services.

## Purpose of the Framework

The purpose for the Framework was developed through in-depth consultations and co-development sessions with a range of stakeholders, including people with lived experience who currently engage with Lifeline. The Lived Experience Framework is intended to ensure:

- A consistent and positive experience for people with lived experience who participate in engagements and for Lifeline staff who coordinate the mechanisms and opportunities.
- The perspectives of people with lived experience inform Lifeline's strategic decisions and service design and improvement through a range of engagement mechanisms.
- Continuous improvement of how Lifeline offers and facilitates lived experience engagement.
- Our strategy to "Transform the experience of Help Seekers" is realised.

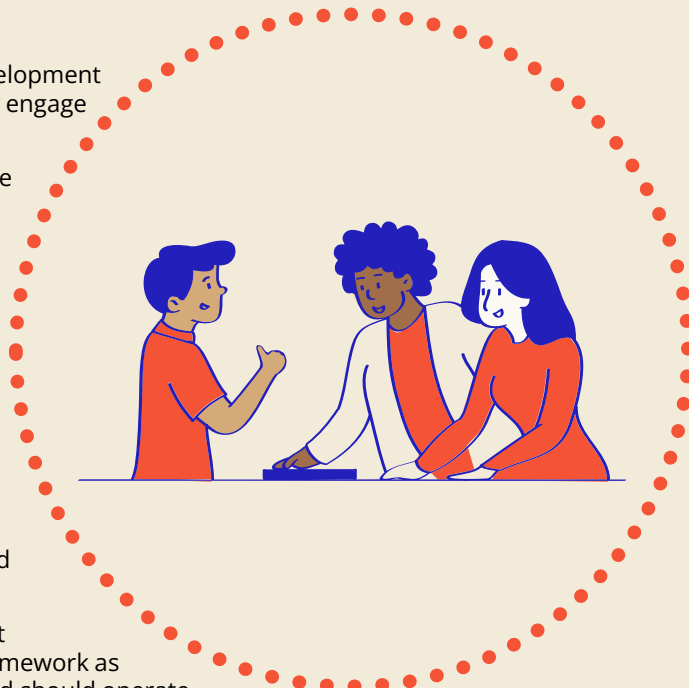
## About this version of the Framework

This is the first version of the Lifeline Australia Lived Experience Framework, and it will continue to be iterated to ensure it supports Lifeline to value lived experience expertise and perspectives across its activities.

This version draws on insights from stakeholder consultations and a desktop review of best practice. This includes an exploration of the overarching purpose and principles for the Framework as well as workshops focused on how the current specific lived experience mechanisms do and should operate.

We believe that to develop a meaningful and sustainable Framework we need to take an adaptive approach, seek feedback during the implementation of the Framework and build organisational readiness to implement changes.

This is a starting point to continue conversations about the Framework, its direction and the shape it needs to take to meet our objectives.





This framework was developed based on discussions with a range of internal and external stakeholders.

# 50 STAKEHOLDERS

representing a range of  
perspectives and experiences

## 16 PEOPLE with LIVED EXPERIENCE

Including members from

- LLA Lived Experience Advisory Group
- LLD Lived Experience Advisory Group
- DV-alert Advisors
- 13YARN Advisors
- Lifeline Ambassadors
- User research participants



## 13 LIFELINE MEMBERS surveyed

## 17 LIFELINE STAFF

ranging from CEO, executive,  
advisory group coordinators,  
service design and delivery

## Scan of 30 FRAMEWORKS

## 14 SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

Including research organisations, government bodies,  
and sector peers

# Framework



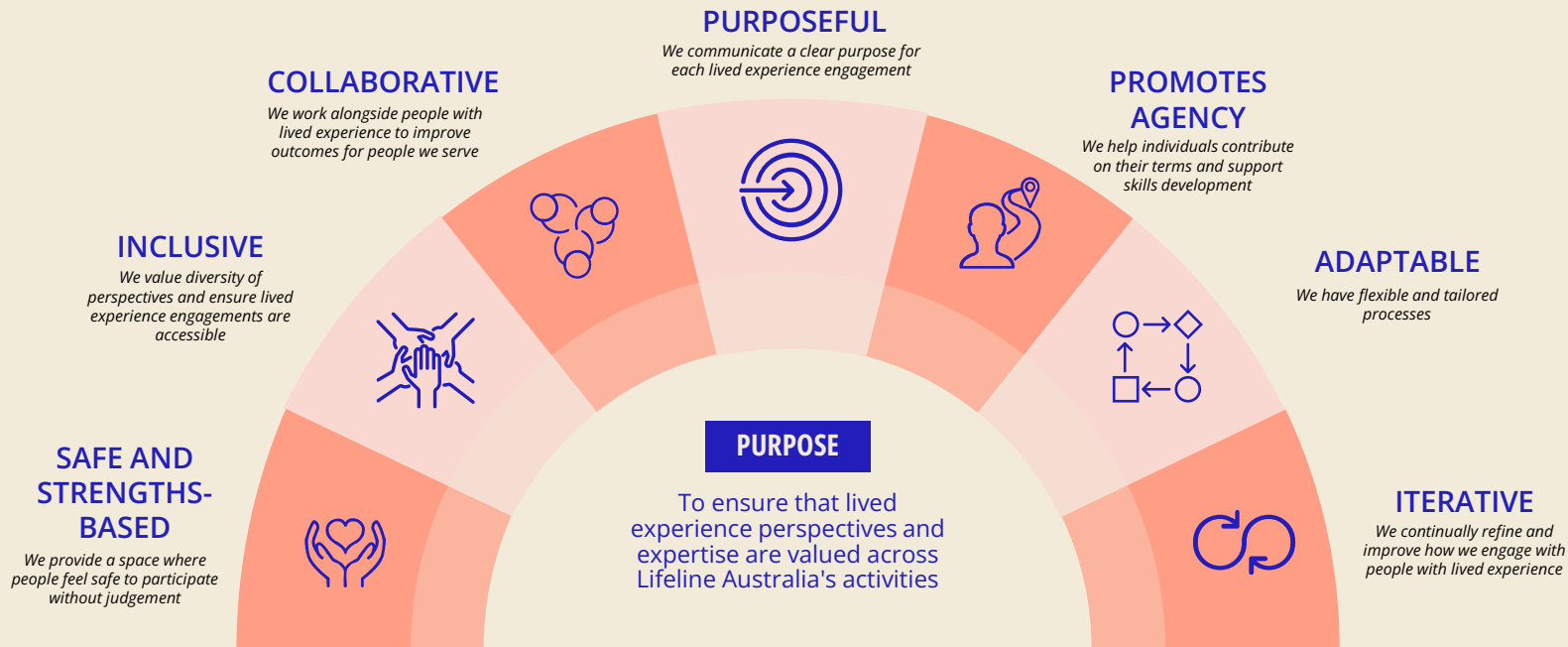
# **We are united by a shared purpose**

To ensure that lived experience perspectives  
and expertise are valued across Lifeline  
Australia's activities.

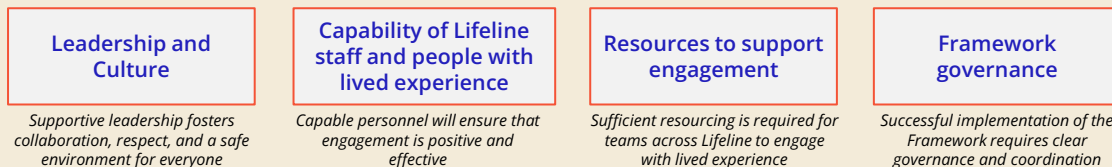
# Lifeline Australia Lived Experience Framework

The Framework aims to ensure a consistent, positive experience for participants and staff in all lived experience engagements, valuing lived experience and integrating it into Lifeline Australia's activities. It will serve as the overall approach to all current and any new lived experience mechanisms.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES






## ENABLERS





# Seven guiding principles apply to lived experience engagement across Lifeline (1/3)

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION / COMMITMENTS	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR LIFELINE?
 <b>SAFE AND STRENGTHS-BASED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We create a safe space for people with lived experience and Lifeline staff involved in lived experience engagement where everyone involved feels safe, respected and able to participate without judgement.</li><li>• We take a strengths-based approach to engaging people with lived experience. We focus on the abilities, knowledge and expertise that people bring to engagements.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Processes and practices that support safety and respect for everyone involved in engagements This may include reciprocal commitments for people with lived experience and Lifeline staff.</li><li>• Processes and practices that promote diversity and support safety for priority groups, including people with lived experience of violence and abuse and First Nations people.</li><li>• Lifeline is responsible for ensuring a safe environment for all people involved in lived experience engagements.</li></ul>
 <b>INCLUSIVE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We value diversity of perspectives and actively work to ensure lived experience engagements are accessible and welcoming for all individuals.</li><li>• We value and are willing to listen to all stories, with no stigma attached to stories that are more challenging or not positive.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A range of engagement mechanisms that meet people's different needs and preferences.</li><li>• Practices and processes that are accessible and appropriate for people with diverse backgrounds and experiences, e.g. First Nations people, people with lived experience of violence and abuse, youth, CALD people, people from regional and rural areas.</li><li>• Representational membership and inclusivity in lived experience engagement mechanisms.</li><li>• A remuneration framework that supports consistent and fair remuneration for the capabilities and contributions expected across mechanisms.</li></ul>

## Seven guiding principles apply to lived experience engagement across Lifeline (2/3)

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION / COMMITMENTS	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR LIFELINE?
 <b>COLLABORATIVE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We work alongside people with lived experience to improve outcomes for people we serve.</li><li>• We recognise power dynamics and build shared decision-making into our ways of working and doing and are transparent when this is not possible.</li><li>• We will be clear on the level of participation required to reflect lived experience voices in our work.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practices, processes and governance structures that promote co-development and shared decision making.</li><li>• Where co-development and shared decision-making is not required, practices and processes for clearly defining the types of engagement and level of participation expected (e.g. utilisation of the <u>IAP2 public participation spectrum</u> or similar).</li></ul>
 <b>PURPOSEFUL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We communicate a clear purpose for each lived experience engagement to help participants understand what is expected of them and how their expertise and time will be utilised.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A clear intent and expectations for each mechanism and engagement communicated to participants in advance. This may involve defining an engagement spectrum (e.g. <u>IAP2 public participation spectrum</u>).</li><li>• Exploration of the required capabilities and plan to support capability development.</li></ul>
 <b>PROMOTES AGENCY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We support individuals to decide how and when they contribute to Lifeline.</li><li>• We support staff and people with lived experience to develop capabilities for effective engagement.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practices and processes that embed safety, respect and dignity, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• equipping people with lived experience with sufficient information so that they may make an informed decision on whether they participate for each engagement and mechanism.</li><li>• ensuring consent ahead of each engagement or every instance where an individual's story will be used.</li></ul></li></ul>

## Seven guiding principles apply to lived experience engagement across Lifeline (3/3)

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION / COMMITMENTS	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR LIFELINE?
 ADAPTABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>We know that lived experience engagements can have a range of objectives and take many shapes and forms, and our processes need to be flexible and tailored.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A balance of whole-of-organisation foundational processes with tailored practices and processes for specific mechanisms and types of engagement as well as diverse cohorts and contexts.</li></ul>
 ITERATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>We are committed to continually assessing and refining how we engage with people with lived experience.</li><li>We want to keep challenging ourselves to ensure that we have the right mechanisms to engage the right people at the right time and for the right reasons.</li><li>We understand the importance of managing change well and will develop a staged implementation plan for the Framework to ensure the roll-out is supported and feasible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Carefully-considered staged implementation and change process supported by a shared purpose and clear governance structures.</li><li>Monitoring and evaluation strategy and associated processes with feedback loops.</li><li>Embedded continuous improvement, including reviewing processes, practices and the current set of mechanisms against sector best practice and changing conditions.</li></ul>

# The following enablers are important to ensure lived experience engagement is sustainable

## LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

Embedding lived experience insights, knowledge and expertise across Lifeline's service design and improvement will require supportive leadership and culture to create an environment which:

- Recognises and supports the expertise of people with lived experience, such as through shared decision-making.
- Views people with lived experience as important partners in achieving Lifeline's mission.
- Fosters reciprocal respect between people involved in lived experience engagement.
- Promotes a learning mindset to try new things and continually improve.

## CAPABILITY OF LIFELINE STAFF AND PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Everyone involved in lived experience engagements should be set up and supported to do this work safely and effectively. This includes:

- Investment in resourcing and capability development of both staff and people with lived experience.
- Ensuring recruitment processes clearly communicate capability expectations for Lifeline staff and people with lived experience.
- Targeted onboarding that ensure staff and people with lived experience understand the practices and processes in place to support them.

## RESOURCING

Engaging with people with lived experience will require resourcing. Project planning needs to consider what is required including:

- Who will be accountable?
- When will engagement take place?
- What is the budget?
- What are the resource and time requirements?

## FRAMEWORK GOVERNANCE

Successful implementation of the Framework requires clear governance.

This includes establishing effective governance for the overall Framework, implementation of the Framework, and for each of the engagement mechanisms.



# There are common elements of what lived experience engagement at Lifeline should look like in practice across all mechanisms

Each type of engagement should be considered separately whether they be for a specific purpose or on-going engagements. These common elements provide a foundation and can be interpreted appropriately for the specific context.

Across their involvement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connection with a consistent point of contact</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to appropriate support</li> </ul>		
Recruitment		Onboarding	Pre-engagement and Engagement	Post-engagement and offboarding
INCLUDES	Outreach, informational sessions, etc.	Orientation, training, resource provision, etc.	Preparatory material, advisory meetings, etc.	Debrief sessions, feedback sessions, exit interview etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clear description/definition of the opportunity (e.g. role description), expectations and capability requirements.</li> <li>Clear communications outlining how to express interest and the recruitment process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract or agreement setting out scope of work, remuneration, and length of engagement.</li> <li>A safe and accessible environment that supports everyone.</li> <li>Sufficient information for people with lived experience to make an informed decision on whether to participate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate time to review materials relevant to engagement.</li> <li>Clear scope of each activity.</li> <li>Person-centred engagement and wellbeing planning when required before new engagements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loop back(s) on the progress or impact of their contribution</li> <li>Formal offboarding process</li> <li>Post-engagement check-in and an opportunity to provide feedback on the specific engagement.</li> </ul>

Minimum standard contracting requirements should also be put in place as appropriate.

# Approach



# Lifeline Australia has a tailored approach to lived experience engagement

## Lifeline Member advisory groups

Aims to ensure the voices of people with lived experience are included throughout Lifeline Member activities

People with lived experience will bring community expertise and geographical connection

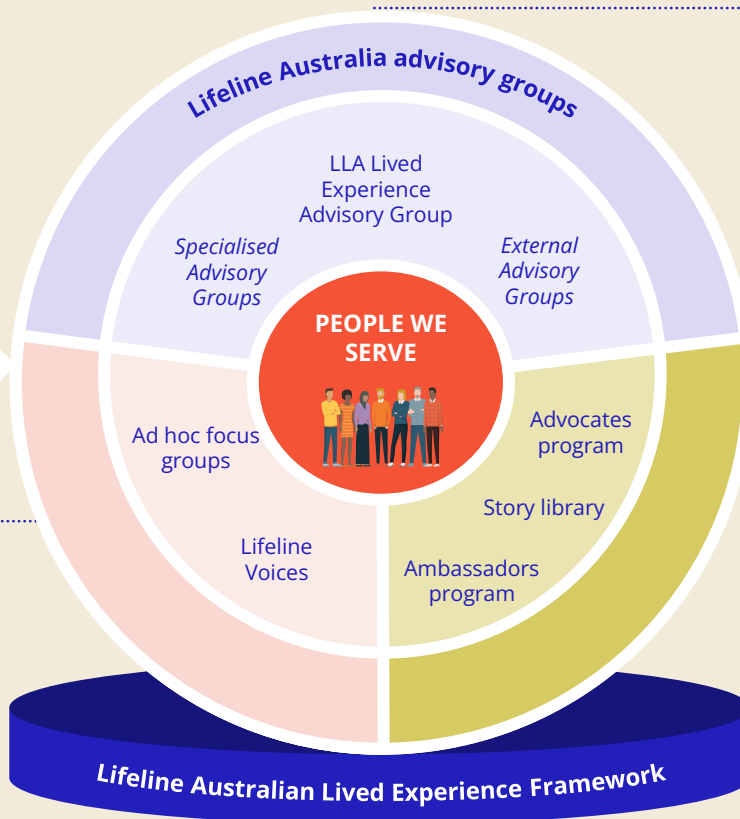
### Lifeline Member groups\*

Other Member mechanisms

## Lifeline Australia service user input

Aims to equip those shaping Lifeline's products and services with a deep understanding of users, potential users, and community members, while quickly generating actionable insights to guide user-informed decisions

People with lived experience will bring relevant experiences or needs



## Lifeline Australia advisory groups

Aims to ensure the voices of people with lived experience are included throughout Lifeline Australia's activities

People with lived expertise will provide strategic advice based on systems level understanding of suicide prevention and the needs and experiences of people with lived experience.

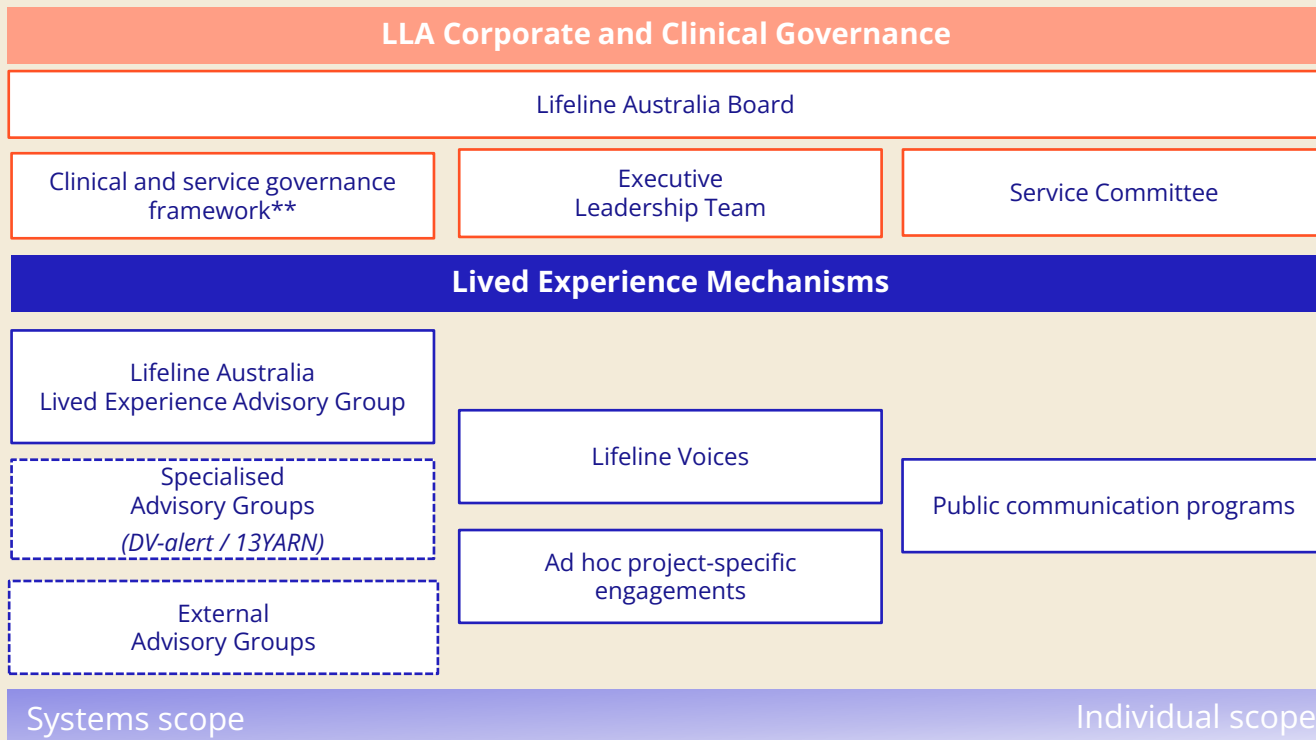
## Lifeline Australia public communications programs

Aims to support storytelling to reduce stigma, show the impact Lifeline can have and motivate people to access support

People with lived experience will bring a willingness to share their story

# How does the Distributed Model of Lived Experience fit into Lifeline Australia's governance?

Lifeline Australia's lived experience mechanisms work to bring advice and input from different levels, from the system and sector down to individual's stories. Lived experience advice is a key input into decision making alongside the perspectives of crisis support staff, research, clinical governance, and organisational priorities; depending on the type of decision to be made.



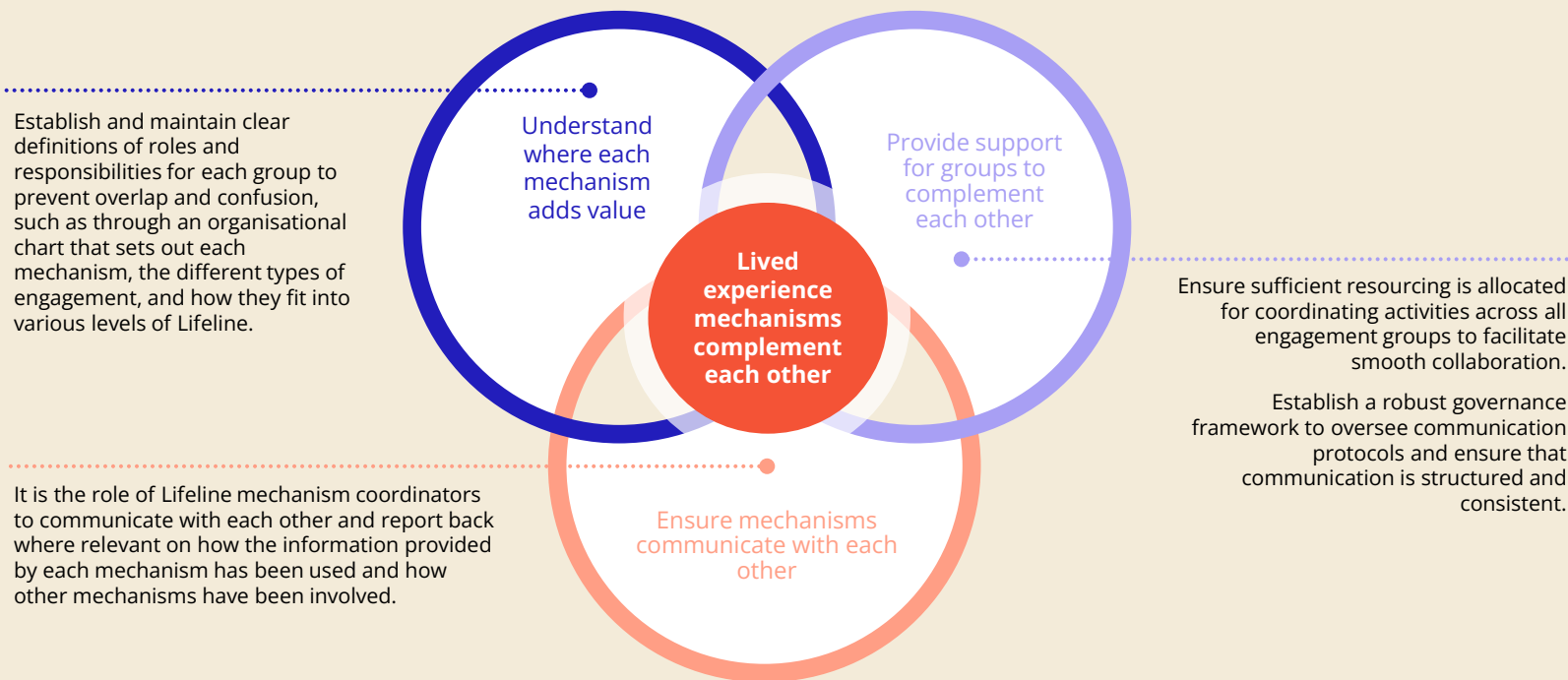
## Lived experience reporting lines

- Meeting summaries and key insights from LLEAG meetings, Lifeline Voices, and public communications programs are reported to the ELT and Service Committee.

\*\* Under re-development

# Lifeline's lived experience engagement mechanisms can complement each other to effectively inform Lifeline's activities

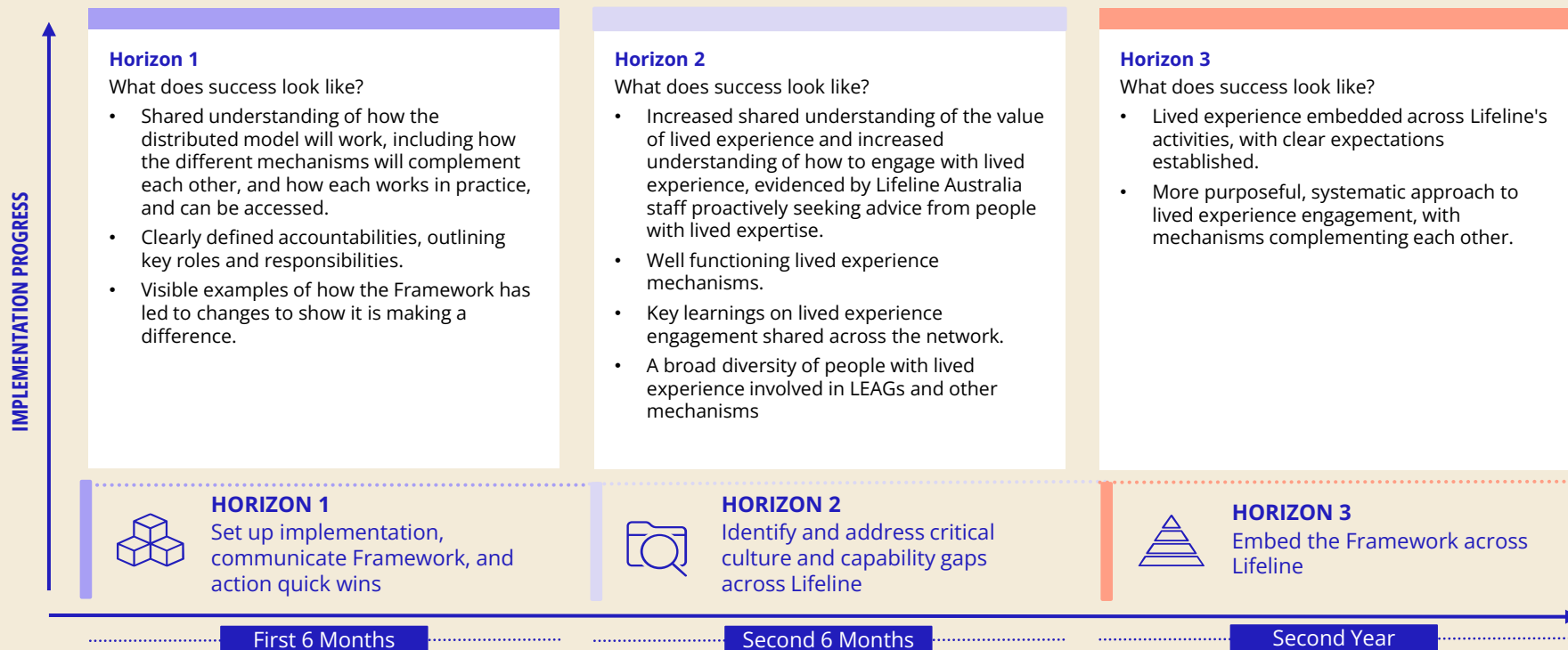
Lived experience engagement mechanisms will often work together to inform areas such as Lived Experience Framework activities, service design and refinements, marketing programs, communication campaigns and research programs. The following factors were highlighted as important to consider:



# Implementation



# Framework implementation will be considered over three key horizons that focus on set up, culture and capability gaps, and embedding the Framework



# Lived Experience Engagement Framework Program Logic

**Goal:** Lived experience perspectives and expertise are valued and purposefully incorporated into Lifeline Australia's activities.

