

Personal Submission

Inquiry into Alcohol and Other Drugs

Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sports

Name

Trevor Royals

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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to draw your attention to a clear gap in our current alcohol and other drugs services in the ability to support people in recovery, preparing them to find meaningful employment. It is clear to me that many people in recovery are without work and do not have the appropriate tools (resumes, confidence in interviews, knowing how to search for roles) to confidently navigate their way to find employment and the associated sense of purpose associated with this.

I bring this to your attention through my own lived experience as a Recovering Alcoholic having been sober for 6 years, along with my professional experience as a Career Coach & Human Resources professional (30 Years). Throughout my journey to recovery, I had often thought about the people I was living my Rehab experience with who did not have jobs or the know-how to find a job that would provide a sense of purpose. Some of the people I got to know would discuss with me their difficulty in finding work and how their self-esteem although sober when coming out of their rehab treatments would be hugely impacted by the rejections associated with the job application process. In some cases, their self-esteem was impacted to the point of returning to their addiction.

During my stays in Rehab due to the conversations I had with fellow people in recovery, on **several** occasions I coached people during and after Rehab in preparing a resume, **developing** a job search strategy and **supporting** them through the interview process. I volunteered this support as I thought that this is not only providing useful tools to assist in getting a job interview, but also by coaching these people I found I was able to assist in building resilience utilizing each interview regardless of the outcome as a learning experience. Further, through building a job search strategy I helped people build their momentum in their job search strategy where other options are always available and hopes were not just hinging on one role, often a driver back to addiction if there are no other options in the mix.

My real lived experience and the lack of genuine support for people in finding meaningful work and a true sense of purpose, I believe may often be a core determining factor in the revolving door of addiction.

My own experience with Alcohol services started around 2014. That experience was vast, broad and largely unsuccessful. I had several 4-week stints in a number of AOD Rehabilitation clinics, both government and private facilities. In my seven stays in Rehab, I was exposed to a broad range of drug dependent people fighting their addictions, across all professions, demographics and stages in life. These addictions ranged from alcohol, Heroin, Painkillers, ICE & gambling. As part of the recovery process, I was also exposed to services that included Alcoholics Anonymous & SMART Recovery. Throughout this time, I was never asked what my next steps were in terms of finding work, nor were there any options available other than what is offered through Centrelink, where job search support was associated with

unemployment benefits. If people had the initiative to actively search for employment support services which is available through some local councils, people do not know it's there and when it is the level of support is basic in what is offered.

Real Coaching support is essential for our community impacted by addiction and Government support to have professionals with lived experience and an understanding of the challenges to assist in preparing people for a role once sober and out of rehab is essential. Such a Service could begin in Rehab with a workshop on preparing for work outside once sober having completed Rehab and then ongoing coaching support post rehab, to develop a resume, build a job search strategy, prepare for interviews and build resilience. I firmly believe by building a job search strategy, with a meaningful goal of finding employment would provide a reduction in the numbers of people returning back to addiction and reducing the numbers of people putting strain on our government services.

My personal commitment to make things better for people coming out of addiction started 6 years ago in Rehab and ever since getting back on my feet working now as a Senior Human Resources manager my major personal commitment and real purpose is to be support in this area. I have actively wanted to contribute in the lived experience space. From early 2022 until December 2023, I had the honour of participating as a lived experience advocate in an advisory role in the development, implementation and launch of the Victorian Voices on Alcohol Harm - Research Report, which was successfully launched in Mid-December 2023. The purpose of this advisory position was to work with other advocates impacted by alcohol (eg FASD, Domestic Violence) to demonstrate the importance of including individuals with Lived Experience in Government Policy decision making around alcohol & it's impacts on the broader community. This project reviewed media (at all levels), advertising and cultural norms associated with alcohol.

Upon the completion of the Report myself along with the 4 other Lived Experience advocates who also contributed to the report, publicly spoke to a cross section of Government, Support Groups, Private Industry & Media at the successful Launch of the Vic Voices on Alcohol Harm report. (December 2023). This experience further developed my understanding of support services offered by the government and only reaffirmed the limited level of support in the return to workplace for people in recovery wishing to return to work.

Since then, I have been involved in providing occasional lived experience support in some small projects. Over the last 2 months such is my commitment to making this support real I have voluntarily begun writing and will ultimately facilitate written a pilot "Getting back on your feet – Work Readiness workshop" for **the Self-Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)**. In the 3 workshops tailored for people specifically in recovery I will cover the following:

Session 1. Exploring our skill and strengths – resume writing

- Who we are now
- The Elephant in the room (Explaining an extended break in my career)

- What do we want?
- Who is the audience?
- Explaining an extended Career Break in the document.
- Commencing a resume (Template of resume provided)

Session 2. Finding the right job – 1.5 hours including check-in and reflection

- Review our resume
- How to write a cover letter
- Where and how we look for work
- What is important to us
- Applying for work

Session 3. Success in interviews –

- Developing answers to common interview questions
- Explaining any gaps in our resumes
- Hints on personal presentation
- Practicing interviews
- Resilience

These 3 workshops will be run towards the end of this year or early next year. I am hoping it will further enlighten me on the demand for such support and other things I may have missed that needs to be added.

I would like to formally request the opportunity to discuss my submission in the public hearing that will be held. In the public hearing I wish to speak to the Steering Committee members about the need for government support that involves rolling out a program that provides the following:

- Resume writing, Job Search skills & Interview training workshops
- Individualised resume development support
- Coaching support through to success in finding a Job

I believe this support can potentially be tailored to support people living with an addiction during their Rehab treatment programs who will be looking to restart their careers. As another option such a program could be made available to such people after coming out of their Rehab programs, enabling them to maintain their momentum in recovery to take the next step in their recovery and find a real sense of purpose. This sense of purpose I honestly believe will be a major contributor to reducing the numbers of people returning back through the revolving door of addiction.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Kind Regards

Trevor Royals