

# Neurodivergence and addictions

A co-designed client responsive support group.

Staumn Hunder and Lynsey Ward.

*We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We recognise, celebrate and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Australians. We acknowledge their unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land and waters, as we strive for equality and safety in community services and health care.*



# Intros

SCCH

Regional context AOD

Staumn

Lynsey

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## Inception.

- The need.
- Client request.
- Research to find local options.



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- Consumers of AOD supports.
- Colleagues informally.
- 1-1 conversations.
- Group consultation.



## Neurodivergence Addiction Support Group

A new support group has recently started in Kyneton that is aimed at neurodivergent adults in the Macedon Ranges who are experiencing addiction issues.

The group meeting takes place fortnightly on a Wednesday at 1.30pm at Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health, 1 Caroline Chisholm Drive in Kyneton. The group is facilitated by an alcohol and other drugs counsellor but the group also draws on the lived experience of the participants, who are encouraged to support fellow members of the group.

The group provides a safe, inclusive and non-judgemental space where participants can explore challenges and successes from the previous fortnight.

Current group members report that benefits of attending the support sessions include meeting others experiencing similar problems and struggles, sharing stories, not feeling alone and being able to discuss things that may help, or have worked in others' experience.

The new support group recognises the unique challenges neurodivergent people experience and their strengths, and the importance of providing tailored guidance and support to help overcome addiction. The group is open to adults with diagnosed or undiagnosed neurodiversity and addiction issues.

If you are interested in joining the group, contact Lynsey or Staumn on 5421 1666 or email [admin@scchc.org.au](mailto:admin@scchc.org.au)

SUBMITTED BY SARAH TURNER.

## Co-design.

- Open floor for suggestions.
- SMART recovery format flagged.
- Check in style.
- Conversation facilitated by staff for now.
- Time limitations (1 hour max).
- Group norms.

## Alcohol and Other Drug Counselling

### Neurodiversity Addiction Support Group

We have been really pleased with the success of our trial neurodiversity addiction group which we have been running for the past six weeks. Attendance has been consistent and we have had very positive feedback from participants.

As a result we will be continuing with the group which will run fortnightly from Wednesday 10 July from 1.30pm at our Kyneton site.

The group offers those with lived experience of neurodiversity and addiction the opportunity to explore their addiction in a safe space. We hope to arrange guest speakers at future sessions.

If you have clients who might be interested, please get them to fill out the [attached intake form](#).

Lynsey Ward  
AOD Counsellor

## 6 session (12 week) trial.

- Feedback from surveys (5 responses).
- Trial period attendance week 6 and week 12.
- Outcomes.
- Ongoing attendance tracking.

## Themes in group.

- Pros and cons of substances to wind down/relax/cope
- Navigating systems pre and post diagnosis
- Cost and benefits of relationships
- Self care – balancing time out, routine, nutrition and supplements
- Costs of masking and pleasing others





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## Barriers/challenges.

- Skepticism about group attendance.
- Concern about target recording.
- Funding for specialist groups/guest speakers.
- Organisation/group management and no time.
- Keeping group safe.

## Creative solutions.

- Zonka-direct client feedback.
- Tracking attendance to gather evidence.
- Recording via counselling programs labelled “group session”.
- Sticking to session time/time management tools.
- Asking for help!
- Intake form developed to screen participants (mostly known to service).





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## Evolution of group.

- Modifications (reduced time, day/time changes).
- Drumming group.
- Researching group needs (hair dressers with quiet times, support for parents etc).
- ?Guest speakers (ADHD coaches etc).
- ?External trips (cafe's, walks in community, events etc).
- ?Chats/Whats app group for peer support.
- ?peer support led groups.



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## Benefits

- Consumer feedback.
- Peer support in group.
- Facilitation practice for staff.
- Learnings for all.
- Consumer voice being respected.

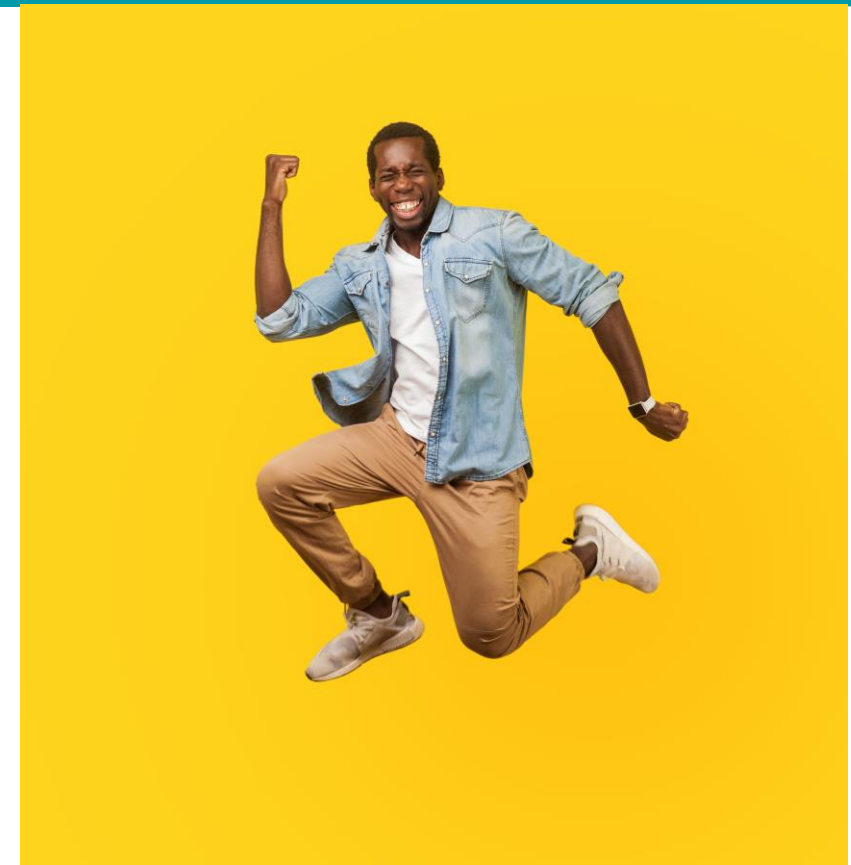


“I would like to offer feedback as a participant of the neurodivergent AOD recovery meetings currently being run through Cobaw Community Health in Kyneton.

I have now attended several sessions across an 11-month period and have found the experience to be overwhelmingly positive. Having a safe space in which to discuss my struggles as a neurodivergent person living with substance abuse issues has aided greatly in my journey of self-acceptance and recovery.

I look forward to each session, and consistently leave feeling uplifted, understood, and supported by both the facilitators and other members of the group.

I also greatly enjoy the opportunity to actively support others in attendance and believe this experience will prove immensely valuable should I ever seek employment in a therapeutic role.”



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Questions?

